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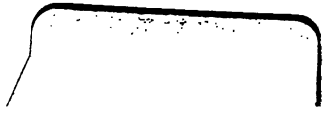

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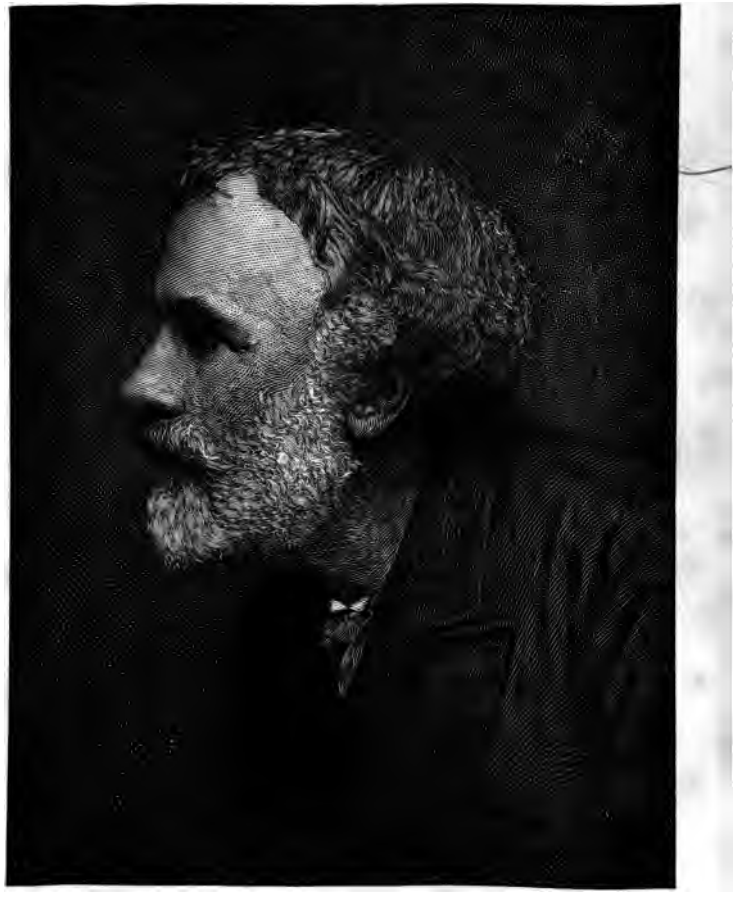

George Meredith.

GEORGE MEREDITH

SOME CHARACTERISTICS

BY

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY

JOHN LANE

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.

1890.

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TO HIM WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES WE MAKE THIS JOINT OFFERING, IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY SHEW US WORTHY TO BE COUNTED AMONG A CERTAIN "ACUTE AND HONOURABLE MINORITY."

PREFACE.

THE following essays make no attempt either to "place" Mr. Meredith or to be a kind of critical microcosm of his work, nor do they presume to speak with any air of finality thereon. There are but three or four living Englishmen in whom such Olympian attitude wonld escape the absurd. Nor do I, on the other hand, as I have elsewhere profanely phrased it, come singing "The Meredithyramb." My whole attempt is that of a lover of the works to give expression to the faith that is in him, and I have written rather for those who are already spending their lives in a vain endeavour to convert masculinity to *The Egoist*, than in the hope of being myself an instrument of conversion.

If the *cui bono* of writing for those who are already "in the place of hope" be questioned, one may reasonably ask if the most seductive of all literary

pleasures does not consist merely in the comparing of impressions and sensations. My attempt is just that, to say some things which, doubtless, no few lovers of George Meredith could have said better, but which as yet they have kept to themselves. If my misses rouse them to make hits, well and good, for, if one cannot be witty oneself, it is, on authority, something to be "the cause that wit is in other men." Of course, I have no objection to a stray convertite or two, and if indeed I should succeed in making such, all the better—for them.

I may say further, more particularly, that I have, in the main, concerned myself more with Mr. Meredith's genius than his talent—if the distinction be not too old-fashioned—not the mass of his work, but only that part of it which I consider peculiarly his own.

Of his Mrs. Chumps and his Master Gammons I have had little to say, and my conscience smites me at the last moment that I have done rather shabby justice to the great Berry. From my point of view it matters little whether his countrymen are or are not as good as Mr. Hardy's, or whether the brogue of this or that supernumerary be correct; for, in my judgment, it is not by such characters that he is to stand or fall. They are the product of a talent that could turn itself to anything, we have had them before from others; but it is by his Sir Willoughby and his great women,

types all his own, that he is to be judged.

My thanks are due to the editors of *Lippincott's* and *Time* for permission to reprint here pages which have already appeared in their respective magazines; and also to Mr. William Morton Fullerton for the pleasant pages on George Meredith in America which conclude the volume.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

October, 1890.

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FRONTISPIECE—PORTRAIT OF GEORGE MEREDITH, from a photograph by Mr. Hollyer.

TO FACE PAGE 168—THE CHALET AT BOXHILL, DORKING, from a sketch by Mr. W. Maxse Meredith.

"Assured of worthiness we do not dread
Competitors: we rather give them hail
And greeting in the lists where we may fail:
Must, if we bear an aim beyond the head!
My betters are my masters: purely fed
By their sustainment I likewise shall scale
Some rocky steps between the mount and vale:
Meanwhile the mark I have and I will wed.
So that I draw the breath of finer air,
Station is nought, nor footways laurel-strewn,
Nor rivals tightly belted for the race.
Good speed to them! My place is here or there;
My pride is that among them I have place:
And thus I keep this instrument in tune."

INTERNAL HARMONY, "Songs and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth," p. 163.

"Surely we owe a little to Time, to cheer his progress; a little to posterity, and to our country. Dozens of writers will be in at yonder yawning breach if only perusers will rally to the philosophic standard. They are sick of the woodeny puppetry they dispense, as on a race-course, to the roaring frivolous. Well, if not dozens, half-dozens; gallant pens are alive; one can speak of them in the plural. I venture to say that they would be satisfied with a dozen for audience, for a commencement."

DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS, chap. I, p. 15.

I.—STYLE AND AIM.

THE shortest way to the distinguishing excellence of any writer is through his hostile critics; for, it is always the quality they most diligently attack. But, as that is invariably the newest thing the writer possesses, this is little to be wondered at, for the majority of critics, in all places and times, are men of the last generation before genius, and the new is naturally as puzzling to them as to all of us. That precious offending quality is generally the most significant of all qualities, style. Most significant, of course, because if we seek out the *reason* of a style, we are at once in the heart of the writer's mystery, at once face to face with his peculiar artistic message. As all style is organic, we have but to track the springs of that organism to come upon the urgent impulse to expression, the quality of which marks, of course, a writer's individuality.

Now, these tests are peculiarly applicable to the work of Mr. George Meredith. His style is at once a pillar of cloud and a pillar of light, it has kept his books for many years in first editions, but it has made those first editions precious as the revelation of arcana. And the reason of it is *The Egoist*. Without the daring metaphor which is its most marked and powerful quality, it would have been impossible to make us see a drama of such infinitesimal subtleties, by no other means could vibrations so infinite have been registered. And in that delicate power we at once discover the central quality of Mr. Meredith's genius. Whatever else he can do, and he can do ever so many wonderful and beautiful things, here is what, so to say, he came to do, whatever else was done or left.

The passion of his genius is, indeed, the tracing of the elemental in the complex; the registration of the infinitesimal vibrations of first causes, the tracking in human life of the shadowiest trail of primal instinct, the hairbreadth measurement of subtle psychological tangents, and the embodiment of these results in artistic form. "In our fat England, the gardener Time is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues

and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them," he writes in one of those passages in *Sandra Belloni* where in the person of "The Philosopher," he occasionally cocks a comical eye at a bewildered public. It is with the drama of these highly-wrought types that Mr. Meredith is concerned, to shew us how "behind the veil of our human conventions power is as constant as ever," and in their apparently unexpressive features to "find the developments and the eternal meanings"—a tragedy all the more impressive for being bloodless, a comedy all the more irresistible because uninterrupted by guffaws. It follows that the quest of Mr. Meredith's style is intensity, that it should be vividly suggestive rather than carefully definitive—all indeed the reverse of the neat French ideal of finality, with its San Graal of "the unique word." With Mr. Meredith it is rather the one, or, maybe, the fifty analogies, all brought together and thrown down in a generous redundancy, so that the one end of conveying his own intense impression to the reader may be achieved. "The art of the pen," says Diana, in a well-known passage, "is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye;

because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description. That is why the poets, who spring imagination with a word or phrase, paint lasting pictures. The Shakesperean, the Dantesque, are in a line, two at most."

Mr. Meredith's method is, indeed, that of the poets and all great imaginative workers. His style may be said to be the result of that process expressed in *Pippa Passes* of following in one art an ideal conceived in another, a process with which we are familiar in the relations of poetry and painting and to which, doubtless, we owe some other products of our new imaginative prose. Such a style was the only possible medium for Mr. Meredith's matter—matter too intricate for verse, and too elusive for "pedestrian" prose. Nothing but vivid metaphor could light up for us such strange untrodden regions of the subjective as those into which Mr. Meredith loves to take us; for, we can only, of course, understand the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, and if "our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description" of the objective, how much less can we hope to hold the elusive impressions of the subjective by such means. As well hope to take down the rapid words of a fluent speaker in long-

hand. The essential quality, then, of Mr. Meredith's work, in his prose as in his verse, is a great metaphor. One wishes above all things to avoid over-accentuation in this present hey-day of the superlative, but one can hardly help asking whether since Shakespeare there has been a handling of imaginative phrase more truly masculine than Mr. Meredith's. Greater artists, both in prose and verse, of course, there have been, but in that one quality of flashing a picture in a phrase, of, so to say, writing in lightning, who are Mr. Meredith's rivals? And it is a power of great suppleness, it is great in the heaviest sword-work, but it can play round a fair head and leave a thistle-down curl on the ground with the most consummate grace; "images that stun the mind like bludgeons" there are on every page, but there are others also delicate as the notes of a zither. So convincing is it too that often as it flashes its light upon some hidden track of thought, or inaccessible lair of sensation, it hardly seems to be metaphor at all, but the very process of thought and feeling literally described. The distinction between objective and subjective is overleaped, and we seem to see matters of spirit and nerve with our very physical eyes. Indeed

that is what such art as Mr. Meredith's must do, for in proportion as it is art will the relevancy of that distinction diminish, if it is true, as surely it is, that the subjective once embodied in art really becomes objective. It is this very realistic closeness to the fact, I am persuaded, that has misled many, unfamiliar with the *nuances* of experience with which it deals, to charge Mr. Meredith with fantasticality. His fancy is prolific and delightful indeed, or we must have missed *Shagpat* from our shelves, but the metaphor I speak of comes of a higher power with which Mr. Meredith is no less richly endowed, imagination. His images have roots, they are there for another service than fancies. Moreover, he has apparently discovered the secret of a mental process which operates more or less with us all, but of which we are only occasionally, some perhaps never, conscious; for is it not true that all impressions come to the most unimaginative through a medium of imagination more or less fantastic in its influence, and that thus the most commonplace occurrence often assumes the quaintest guise. Through the subtlety of his imagination Mr. Meredith has come into possession of this distorting glass, and it is either because we have

never realized the process in ourselves, or are unable to recognise it again in his characters, that he may sometimes seem puzzling or overstrained. In short, Mr. Meredith's imagination is subtle enough to embody the workings of imagination. An example will best illustrate my meaning, and I will take one that has been a favourite with certain unsympathetic critics, from *The Egoist.*

"'You are cold, my love? you shivered,'" said Sir Willoughby Patterne, as he walked across his park one morning with his betrothed Clara Middleton, then in the throes of her first effort to break off her engagement.

"'I am not cold,' said Clara, 'someone, I suppose, was walking over my grave.' The gulf of a caress hove in view like an enormous billow hollowing under the curled ridge. She stooped to a buttercup; the monster swept by."

This image has more than once been selected for scorn, from the impression, I suppose, that it is merely a piece of extravagant fancy, a wilful euphuism, whereas, it is surely an example of a most subtle realism. To a sensitive girl such as Clara, in such an attitude as hers to her betrothed, already beginning to dread his loathed attentions, it would really be in some such large image

of fright that a threatened caress would menace her; especially as her fear had already set her imagination in a state of ferment: and to have simply said that she shrank from his caress and escaped, would have been merely the statement of an onlooker and have given us little idea of her internal tumult as she did so. We should only have *seen* her shrink, whereas now we *feel* her do so. I am convinced that the majority of Mr. Meredith's so-called fantasticalities have such true imaginative basis, and that if the reader cannot realise it, the fault is certainly his own. Not that I would say that Mr. Meredith never misses. Like everyone else, he has "the defects of his qualities," and it would not be difficult to place one's finger on images that seem the result of his employing his method in uninspired moments—a certain bewildering and unbeautiful personification of Old Time, for instance, on an early page of *The Tragic Comedians*—but such are quite inconsiderable set against page after page of brilliant success.

So far in speaking of Mr. Meredith's style I have referred to that quality in his writing which is most distinctly his own—that which forces us to talk of "Meredithese"—and have

dealt with it in relation to the subject matter, through stress of which, I conceive, it was born. But though its genesis was, I think, really as I have indicated, he, nevertheless, applies it to many a charming use other than that for which it grew; while he is capable of putting it aside altogether—as in *Vittoria* or *Rhoda Fleming*—and writing Saxon simple as a song. As in the case of all men who have the greater gift, he has, as I have said, a most remarkable, an Elizabethan power of fancy. No one is fonder of sword-exercise for its own sake. Of how he loves to beget beautiful things in mere wantonness, to discover the soul of a thing, as it were, in play, the well-known "leg" passage or the chapter on "an aged and a great wine" in *The Egoist*, are familiar examples. Another delicious instance in the same book, being of more quotable size, I shall venture to copy it here.

"He placed himself at a corner of the doorway for her to pass him into the house, and doted on her cheek, her ear, and the softly dusky nape of her neck, where this way and that the little lighter-coloured, irreclaimable curls running truant from the comb and the knot—curls, half-curls, root-curls, vine ringlets, wedding-rings, fledgeling feathers, tufts of down, blown wisps—waved or fell, waved over or up or involutedly, or strayed, loose and downward, in the form of small silken paws, hardly any of them much thicker than a crayon shading, cunninger than long round locks of gold to trick the heart."

Even when he sets himself for a serious characterisation there is still the same playful profusion of means. Witness the following masterly description of a style with which Mr. Meredith's own has much of essential relationship. Without the allusion to the *Lectures on Heroes* would anyone need to be told the name of the writer referred to? The passage occurs near the beginning of *Beauchamp's Career.*

"His favourite author was one writing on Heroes, in (so she esteemed it) a style resembling either early architecture or utter dilapidation, so loose and rough it seemed; a wind-in-the-orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster; sentences without commencements running to abrupt endings and smoke, like waves against a sea-wall, learned dictionary words giving a hand to street-slang, and accents falling on them haphazard, like slant rays from driving clouds; all the pages in a breeze, the whole book producing a kind of electrical agitation in the mind and joints. This was its effect on the lady."

Applied to nature the same style has given us description as new as it is always vivid, and often throbbing with a beauty of passionate light and bloom; that wonderful sunset in *Richard Feverel*, or this graphic bit descriptive of rain in the country, from *The Egoist.*

"Rain was universal; a thick robe of it swept from hill to hill; thunder rumbled remote, and between the ruffled roars the downpour pressed down on the land with a great noise of eager gobbling, much like that of the swine's trough fresh filled."

But, to turn again to larger considerations, Mr. Meredith's style is not only significant of the subtle work its master had to do, but also of the temper in which he has done it. Mr. Meredith is a realist, but a realist who uses metaphor is not greatly to be feared. He is a realist as all the great artists have been, not after the modern pattern of those "whom the world imagines to be at nature's depths" because they "are impudent enough to explore its muddy shallows," but after the manner of the poets. His is that imaginative realism, which, after much unhappy experience of another kind, we are again coming to recognise as not simply the only realism but the only art. It follows, therefore, that with all his subtleties of analysis, Mr. Meredith is no pessimist, as all the small realists must be. On the contrary, the work of Mr. Browning is not more robustly optimistic. How much of spiritual comfort we all owe to the poet of *Rabbi Ben Ezra* "bitter constraint and sad occasion" has but lately set us sorrowfully testifying, yet I feel that to some minds Mr. Meredith's optimism will be still more helpfully convincing, because, though he feels that "we have little to learn from apes," he fearlessly accepts the most melancholy results

of modern science in a way that Mr. Browning, of course, refused to do. Really the faith of each is at base the same, as all faith is one, that instinctive reliance, in the face of all apparent contradiction, that "all's right with the world," which genius rarely misses; but the weight of assurance each brings to another must, of course, depend on that other's needs, and the relativity of those to the weight of contradiction overcome.

Mr. Meredith's attitude may be forcibly summed up in two of his own sentences, one from the lips of Diana—"who can really *think* and not think hopefully?"—and the other, an example of *in vino veritas*, from those of Mr. Pole—"No one has said the world's a jolly world so often as I have. It's jolly!" It would be impossible to think more ruthlessly than Mr. Meredith, he has been ever resolute in tearing from life every vestige of sentimentality, yet it has been to leave us with all the deeper impression of its high and mystic significance.

"You destroy the poetry of sentiment, Dr. Middleton," said Whitford.

"To invigorate the poetry of nature," was the answer.

II.—"THE EGOIST," "RICHARD FEVEREL," AND THE NOVELS GENERALLY.

IF I am right in my statement of the nature of Mr. Meredith's peculiar art, there can hardly be any doubt that of all his books *The Egoist* is its most absolute product; for, therein he gives himself up entirely, without the smallest attempt at compromise with a "gallery" public, to his intellectual passion, on the track of that most fundamental of all our instincts, the lust of self. There are no clowns, at least of the old-fashioned sort, and no intervals whatever for refreshment. There is nothing to be done but to like it or leave it, sit up with it through the small hours, or doze over it at noonday. There is no middle course. If it is not predestined for one, one can no more live through a chapter than write it; if it is—well, we break our hearts in trying to write about it.

Self! Selfishness! What comparatively placid words they used to be, words to be birched out of us by fifteen, when a primitive dragonish

hunger for biggest apples and largest slices is supposed to give place to the gentlemanly instincts; a thing to quote Dr. Watts about and be sent to bed for, a vice to be tamed by a prefix, changed through all its snaky syllables by wearing the crown of a decorous negative: as little understood as was the circulation of the blood before Harvey. Yes! Mr. Meredith is the Harvey of the Ego. But though a philosopher with a temperament of exceptional sensitiveness might have made and tabulated his discoveries, no one but an artist of great power could have given them that vivid form in which only can a living sense of their portentous significance be impressed.

Stated abstractly, the information that each of us has a South-sea Islander somewhere within one, would hardly interfere with our appetites; we would take it as tranquilly as we do Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, or Mr. Gomme's collections from *The Gentleman's Magazine*. But handled as Mr. Meredith has handled it, it is very different, it is nothing short of a terror. Not simply to tell us, but to make us by his dreadful lightning *see* the vampire in all of us, see with what horrid channels connected, by what almost imperceptible arteries, self circulates through every

corner of our being; to shew us the face of Mr. Hyde in the most trifling of its wilful acts, to make us shudder at such as we would at murder, and, indeed, to feel them no less, nay, perhaps more than that—as the essences of poisons are the most deadly—this it was to write *The Egoist.*

This may sound strong, I wish it were ten times stronger; and to justify it it may be thought that the Egoist should appear Caliban-backed and cloven-footed, and a young country squire, of handsome presence, of manners and culture—well, it cannot be he! Besides, good women love him. Yes! for, as his clever friend Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson phrased it, "You see he has a leg."

"There it is, and it will shine through! He has the leg of Rochester, Buckingham, Dorset, Suckling; the leg that smiles, that winks, is obsequious to you, yet perforce of beauty self-satisfied; that twinkles to a tender midway between imperiousness and seductiveness, audacity and discretion; between 'you shall worship me,' and 'I am devoted to you;' is your lord, your slave, alternately and in one. It is a leg of ebb and flow and high-tide ripples. Such a leg, when it has done with pretending to retire, will walk straight into the hearts of women. Nothing so fatal to them. Self-satisfied it must be. Humbleness does not win multitudes or the sex."

This was on the occasion of his coming of age, when his egoism was as yet at gambol like a young tiger, though it was soon to shew its fangs.

At this time a report went abroad that he was engaged to a certain dashing young lady of wealth and beauty, by name Constantia Durham, while others whispered of Laetitia Dale, the daughter of a retired army-surgeon living on Sir Willoughby's estate, "portionless and a poetess." "Here she comes with a romantic tale on her eyelashes" was Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson's portrait of her. And, certainly, there was much to colour this report, for they had been boy and girl playmates, she had written verses in honour of his majority, and he was unmistakeably attentive to her. A third rumour gives us a first comical glimpse of egoism—"a story of a brilliant young widow of the aristocracy who had very nearly snared him." "A widow?" he said on hearing of it. "I!" The story was to be contradicted in positive terms. "'A widow!' straightening his whole figure to the erectness of the letter I." Meanwhile, Miss Durham "had been nibbled at, all but eaten up" by rivals, notably by a young Captain Oxford; and receiving warning of this, Sir Willoughby at once proposed and was accepted—though his sense of niceness was affected at taking her so after the soiling pursuit of others. "She had not come to him

out of cloistral purity, out of perfect radiancy.... He wished for her to have come to him out of an egg-shell, somewhat more astonished at things than a chicken, but as completely enclosed before he tapped the shell, and seeing him with her sex's eyes first of all men"—a demand of spurious niceness which Mr. Meredith again and again, throughout the book and elsewhere, traces to its springs in "infinite grossness"—"the ultra-refined but lineally great-grandson of the Hoof." But, on the contrary, "she talked frankly of her cousins and friends, young males!" "The dust of the world," the soiling, circumscribing world, the natural enemy of the Ego was on her. However, he was engaged, and though Laetitia did love him, had loved him from girlhood, still she was able to join in the chorus of congratulation, for she had never dared to hope for herself, and could not bear to think him wrong; she loved him, indeed, as Mr. Meredith expresses it, with the not uncommon female "ecstacy of the devotee of Juggernaut." But a surprise was in store for her and the county. Suddenly it was told that Miss Durham had run away with Captain Oxford and was his wife; and then came Laetitia's little hour Fortification against the possible sneers of

that world, so despised and yet so feared, was provided by the circulation of a story to the effect that, far from his being jilted, Sir Willoughby had never really cared for Constantia, but accepted her as his mother's choice, and that her action sprang from a frenzied jealousy of Laetitia, with whom he had taken care to be seen at church and out walking at the earliest possible moment after his learning the news. It was with the air of "a man thus broken loose from an unhappy tangle to return to the lady of his first and strongest affections" that he came back to Laetitia. For several months a quiet courtship ensued between them, and county gossip once more rippled tranquilly over a certainty—to be rudely ruffled again by the sudden news one morning that, almost without a word, Sir Willoughby had left England for a tour of the globe. The inference against Laetitia seemed brutally obvious. And the county would have pitied her, says Mr. Meredith, and thanked her for a sensation if she had only "attempted pathos," but she was too proud for that, "the opportunity passed undramatised," and retiring within herself she took up her cross as one of those "patiently starving women" of whom Mr. Meredith writes so tenderly, and of whom she was to be the type.

Sir Willoughby had gone abroad accompanied by his cousin Vernon Whitford, whom Mrs. Mountstuart described as "Phœbus Apollo turned fasting-friar," a phrase, says Mr. Meredith, which "painted the sunken brilliancy of the lean long-walker and scholar at a stroke." A kind of George Warrington, I think, James Thomson well calls him, and like George too he was the victim of an early matrimonial indiscretion. He was one of those illuminating dependents whom Sir Willoughby loved to keep about him as, so to say, altar-candles. To have "a poet, still better a scholar, attached to your household," to date his prefaces from Patterne Hall, was an additional candle, as M. Dehors, his French cook, for instance, was another. The two cousins wrote home accounts of their travels, the one really serving (in the eyes of "the Patterne ladies," that is Sir Willoughby's mother and two sisters) but as a foil to the other. Vernon "endeavouring sadly to digest all he saw and heard," in his modest student way, Sir Willoughby, in the great comic British fashion, "holding an English review of his maker's grotesques." Ah! but one was a Whitford, the other a Patterne! Their return at the end of three years is the occasion of our first

piercing glimpse into the heart of egoism. Driving through his park on the morning of his return, the first friend he meets is Laetitia out with school-children gathering flowers.

"He sprang to the ground and seized her hand. 'Laetitia Dale!' he said. He panted. 'Your name is sweet English music! And you are well? The anxious question permitted him to read deeply in her eyes. *He found the man he sought there, squeezed him passionately, and let her go*, saying, 'I could not have prayed for a lovelier home-scene to welcome me than you and these children flower-gathering. I don't believe in chance. It was decreed that we should meet. Do not you think so?'

Laetitia breathed faintly of her gladness."

I question if any honest person of the male persuasion ever read this passage without its catching his breath, and making him put down the volume for a moment or two's thought—to take it up, perchance, a different man. Here, in a phrase from which one reels sick as from a blow, is the mainspring, here we first realise *what* this egoism is; and we take up the book again eagerly on the watch for every sensitive vibration, some of us, may be, like an invalid, when, having at length in some bulky pharmacopœia come across his own particular asthma or rheumatism, he rushes hungrily at all the symptomatic details. Let us follow this scene a line or two further. Talking rapturously of the English green,

"'It is wonderful. Leave England and be baked, if you would appreciate it. You can't, unless you taste exile as I have done—for how many years? How many?'

'Three,' said Laetitia.

'Thirty!' said he. 'It seems to me that length. At least I am immensely older. But looking at you, I could think it less than three. You have not changed. You are absolutely unchanged. I am bound to hope so. I shall see you soon. I have much to talk of, much to tell you. I shall hasten to call on your father. I have specially to speak with him. I—what happiness this is, Laetitia! But I must not forget I have a mother. Adieu; for some hours—not for many!' He pressed her hand again. He was gone."

What could poor Laetitia think? "What but—! she dared not phrase it or view it." Yet "at their next meeting she was 'Miss Dale.'" And soon this game of cat and mouse was to be made all the more inhuman by the introduction of an unconscious third, in the shape, of course, of another Constantia Durham—Clara Middleton, the one beautiful daughter of a certain Dr. Middleton, a stately member of our wealthy British theocracy, a type of rich humour whom we shall have to consider in another chapter. The news came through young Crossjay Patterne, a patronised son of a contemned cousin "in the marines" (a distinguished commander), to whom Vernon had undertaken to act as tutor. and who had brought brightness into Laetitia's life by being "sent out" from the hall to lodge with her

and what it is to have such a friend to come to in a woman! The "Platonic" idea is not impossible she has taught him. "Wives are plentiful, friends are rare. I know *how* rare!" Then a little sentimental depreciation of life in halls in favour of that in a cottage like hers, at which she shakes her head, and he rejoins

"'You may know me,' bowing and passing on contentedly. He stopped—'But I am not ambitious.'

'Perhaps you are too proud for ambition, Sir Willoughby.'

'You hit me to the life!'

He passed on regretfully, Clara Middleton did not study and know him like Laetitia Dale."

Clara did not, she "did otherwise conceive of love," and already she was feeling that "something,' in the earliest days of his courtship at Upton Park, for which she had yet found no name. A "whirlwind wooing" at last caused them to be plighted, though that something still weighed upon her.

Perpetual discourses on the ideal love, a daily catechism on the child's "do you really—*really* love me?" pattern, needing an ever closer embrace of assurance, till within the first day or so of their engagement he had reached the astonishing demand that even "beyond death" she would still be his alone,—"'His widow' let them say; a saint in widowhood,"—while that

monster world above all was anathema : this was what his wooing had become. In short, he "desired to shape her character to the feminine of his own," and she preferred to be herself. "She would not burn the world for him ; she would not, though a purer poetry is little imaginable, reduce herself to ashes, or incense, or essence, in honour of him, and so, by love's transmutation, literally be the man she was to marry."

This constant "angling for the first person in the second" on Sir Willoughby's part, by his occasional unconcealed irritation with unsuccess, gave her, one day, a hint of his endeavour and she answered to his thought with "It is not too late, Willoughby," This wounded him and he forthwith "lectured her on the theme of the infinity of love." "How was it not too late ? They were plighted ; they were one eternally ; they could not be parted. She listened gravely, conceiving the infinity as a narrow dwelling where a voice droned and ceased not. However, she listened. She became an attentive listener."

After two or three months of this, Dr. Middleton's stay at Upton Park came to an end and Sir Willoughby, on the plea of finding him a suitable residence in the neighbourhood, induced him to

come and be his guest in the interval. Clara tried to resist, but in vain, and with their arrival at Patterne Hall this "comedy" really begins. All so far has been but a marshalling of the *dramatis personæ*, taking up but fifty pages; in the next five hundred we are to see them act.

Further than this I do not here propose taking the reader. I have followed the story so far because I felt it was the best way of giving any one unacquainted with the book an idea of the manner in which Mr. Meredith has dealt with his chief character—a manner which no generalising could well convey, and I think that in the foregoing extracts he will have been able to gain a living conception of what fashion of man the Egoist was. All the subtleties of his psychology, of course, are not exhibited therein, for they can only be traced by minutely following the interplay of the various individualities, by the working out of the problem that soon presents itself—will Clara have the courage and the power, now that she has the resolution, to win her freedom again, or will Sir Willoughby, with the one powerful conventional weapon she has given him, her plighted troth, backed by endless resource of sophistry and the lower subterfuges to which his

egoism is capable of sending him, win the day. And, remember it is civilized warfare, where etiquette has to be observed, and one cannot end the game by dashing the board on the carpet. It is that essential drama to which actions, in the ordinary sense, stand but as the scoring in the pauses of the game, the external result of the unseen play of opposing individualities. This scoring is practically the whole of the "popular" drama, which would matter little if it stood for any real signification, but as it proceeds simply at the caprice of the marker, is, indeed, nothing more than a playing with the register—well, of course, it makes that drama utterly valueless to anyone who cares about the game of life at all seriously. To abandon imagery, lest the reader, like Cecilia, should conceive himself "addressed as a primitive intelligence," the plot of *The Egoist* grows as the outcome of character instead of being manipulated according to the will and pleasure of the novelist. The novelist watches and records, but never interferes. It is, of course, the difference between men and women and "wooden puppetry." "The catastrophe" comes "pat" as a mathematical result, and one has the satisfaction of that complete artistic whole, which,

I should say, is, generally speaking, more within the reach of so-called "subjective" than of "objective" drama. This question of plot is indeed an easier one to settle in the case of the former than of the latter, what happens *in* a man is less a question for the arbitrary invention of the novelist than what happens *to* him; and I think this is felt when one comes to compare the ending of *The Egoist* and the ending of *Richard Feverel* or *Beauchamp's Career*. There is an element admitted into the working out of the two latter stories, which, of course, is operative in the subjective world as well, but hardly as constantly or as volcanically—that of Chance, That it is no unimportant element of life we know, but how and when it is to be introduced into Art is the question, one which is as old as it seems unanswerable. Our modern method of dealing with it would seem to be that the particular chances to which the *dramatis personæ* are subjected shall be such as are not unlikely to arise out of their characters. Then, of course, there are various degrees of chances in our lives, some so frequent as to be usual and unsurprising—Richard's meeting with Lucy by the river, for instance—and such are not, therefore, disturb-

ances in art. But to be struck by lightning on the way home to dinner is another degree of chance, no less unusual than disagreeable. That Beauchamp should die by drowning as he did, was, of course, quite a possibility in the case of a man so unselfish and intrepid, but in spite of the fine note of tragic irony such as is life's own so struck, one feels no such inevitability about his end as comes with the last chapter of *The Egoist*. It does not seem of the same colour with the rest of the book, but merely a wilful darkening of the woof. Beauchamp might have been so drowned on his way home to wife and happiness, but the chances were a thousand to one against it.

In *Richard Feverel* we are confronted with a similar trouble, and though I doubt if, to set matters right, it would now be anyone's choice to lose a scene drawn with such vividness of power as that of Richard's terrible parting from his wife, yet as a part of a whole, I, for one, cannot feel it homogeneous. If one could have been prepared for these catastrophes by some manner of undefined foreshadowing, they might very likely have impressed one as fit; and if it be retorted that life gives no such warnings, one can only answer that, after all, Art is but a compromise.

Mr. Meredith names *The Egoist* a "comedy in narrative," but in doing so he uses the word comedy with a significance which is rarely respected, and of which it will be necessary to speak further in the next chapter. Suffice it here to say that mere satire, humour, or any species of fun-making are all very distinct from, however related to, that significance. These but result from the working of the comic spirit which in itself is only a detective force; they are, of course, included in this present comedy, but they are far from all. When one comes to consider Sir Willoughby one realises how far. He is Mr. Meredith's great study in that Comic Muse which he invokes in his first chapter, and yet he hardly keeps the table on a roar. At least, laughter is not the only emotion he excites; tears and terror rainbowed by laughter might figure our complicated impression. A tragic figure discovered for us through the eye of comedy. It is certainly comic, in the customary sense, to see that great-mannered sublimity, that ultra-refined sentimentalism reduced to paradox by the exposure of its springs; but the laugh is only at the inconsistency, it can hardly face the fact. And to see Sir Willoughby on his knees vainly imploring

that Laetitia, who has all through served but as an "old-lace" foil for Clara, and with utter difficulty at last winning her, not for her sake either, but for fear of the world, the east wind of the world, and no longer the worshipful Juggernaut Laetitia of old, but Laetitia enlightened and unloving,—all this is comic of course; to see tables turned is always comic, but we must not forget that life is before them, and, as Hazlitt says, "When the curtain next goes up it will be tragedy"—if the situation on which it falls can be called anything else. Sir Willoughby indeed inspires that greatest laughter which has its springs in the warmth and the richness of tears. If he is Mr. Meredith's greatest comic study, he is, at the same time, his most pathetic figure. Of course, his pathos is not of the drawing-room ballad order, any more, indeed, than his comedy would "select" for a "library of humour"—those fields are full, Mr. Meredith rarely strives there, possibly for the same reason that Landor strove not. But those for whom he has any appeal must feel with his creator that "he who would desire to clothe himself at everybody's expense, and is of that desire condemned to strip himself stark naked, he, if pathos ever had a form, might

be taken for the living person. Only he is not allowed to run at you, roll you over and squeeze your body for the briny drops. There is the innovation." The pathos, as everything else in the book, is *essential.* That is, of course, why *The Egoist* is so preeminently Mr. Meredith's typical book, and Sir Willoughby his typical characterisation; and there could hardly be a more victorious justification of a method. One great wonder, that before reading might well have been a great fear, is that, despite the endless dissection of Sir Willoughby, the revelation of every 'petty artery' and tissue, he still keeps his outline and remains whole and living to our eyes, when he might so easily have resulted in an anatomical diagram, where one cannot grasp the whole for the parts, and the human form disappears beneath nets of veinwork and muscle. If it were otherwise, it would be impossible to understand how such a monster could be tolerated in any society, but as it is, while we have the fullest knowledge of his ghastly inner constitution, we are yet able to see him as those about him did; the courtly gentleman, generous to, if a little exacting from his dependents, with many charms that might well keep that something

twisted in him, the existence of which he himself suspected as little as anyone, from exposure, save under stress of the very closest relations.

Besides, his primary importance as one more great addition to Art's "men and women," Sir Willoughby has another significance as a satire on masculinity; he is the type of it, "the original male in giant form;" and, though a world-wide type, especially does he stand for the British male, at once, perhaps, the finest, and certainly the most obnoxious representative of his sex. His silly airs of omnipotence, his dull-eyed numb conceit, his ridiculous solemnities, his boorish exclusiveness, his spurious niceties and sham moralities, his utter fundamental earthiness and vulgarity and all the various too-well-known characteristics that rear an ass's head upon the paws and haunches of the national lion; these that it is feared satirists will continue to satirise without sending a ray of awakening into his dull self-satisfied head, these Mr. Meredith has satirised with a laughter that surely would reach the ears of the creature, if they were but as sensitive as they are long. In all his books Mr. Meredith has amused himself with this ridiculous John Bull, whose good qualities, let us not forget, he can

embody with no less vigour; but not even in *Diana*, where he strikes such a stroke for womanhood against that masculinity incarnate, the British Bench, has he dealt him such a blow.

Of the other characterisations in the book, each so firm and living, of the dialogue that made James Thomson exclaim upon it as the greatest ever written in the English tongue, of the wit and the poetry of style, of these space forbid writing here, though I hope to refer to them, in a general way, later on. One perfection, however, should be here noted, the artistic unity of the whole book; an unity that perhaps no other of Mr. Meredith's books, except *Rhoda Fleming*, achieves, though probably in the opinion of most *Diana* would be a third. But, speaking for myself, and much as I cherish *Diana*, the conclusion somehow troubles me. I cannot read it without incongruous reminiscense of the last line in *The Angel in the House*. *The Egoist*, however, excites no such feelings, the colours all blend, and the 'composition' is perfect. Dramatic grouping so fit, action so organic, and, as I have said, a *dénoûment* so related, is surely a high bid for perfection in the novelist's art.

Yet, if *The Egoist* is thus the book which of all

Mr. Meredith's books commands wonder, *Richard Feverel* is that which wins our love. For, love of a book, need one say, is often independent of its perfection or imperfection as art—'subject' has yet so many adherents among us. The subject of *The Egoist* is recondite, though near enough, the subject of *Richard Feverel* is—a first love. The difference of appeal to many will be almost that between the appeal of prose and poetry. I spoke, a page or two back, of what I conceived to be an artistic defect in the latter. If that prevents my considering *Richard Feverel* successful as a whole, it can in no way affect it in its brilliant parts. Mr. Meredith names it in a sub-title, "The History of a Father and a Son," and it is evidently in the light of a story of an experiment, namely, that of the training of a youth upon a philosophic system, that he would have us regard it. I, however, do not feel that it is thus we are to come at its importance. This motive distinctly influences the plot, and gives us much wisdom on the subject of education, but it seems to me that the plot is made to fit it, rather than to flow from it, and, apart from the flaw referred to above, I regard the plot of *Richard Feverel* as its one weakness. Its real importance for me lies in its

being not so much a story as a study of young love, in its powerful characterisation—especially of Adrian Harley—and in its magnificent style. This, it would thus appear, was as mature in its writer's twenty-seventh year as in this later day of *Diana of the Crossways.* It is no injustice to his other books to say that *Richard Feverel* is fuller of fine things than any one of them, brilliant as each is. And, of course, the greatest thing in it is the matchless lyric of the early love of Lucy and Richard; for so I venture to name the two chapters, 'Ferdinand and Miranda,' and 'A Diversion played on a Penny Whistle,' chapters which could be taken bodily from their context to make one complete poem, to stand with the very greatest of all such idylls. Not since the *Vita Nuova* has there been another such expression of that wonder, so sweet and awful, the breathless first awakening of love within the soul of a boy and a girl, with all the bloom of its starry transfiguration. *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi!* The lovers of Verona are mature by Lucy and Richard.

It is, I think, primarily owing to these chapters that *Richard Feverel* is the one novel of Mr. Meredith's which can in any sense be said to be

'popular.' Readers who know nothing else of his writing know these chapters, and there can be no passage in his works from which there is less actual necessity to quote. At the same time, some quotation from them seems requisite in these pages, the aim of which is, to discriminate and exhibit in some measure the individual side of Mr. Meredith's power. So accept, reader, what if you are of my mind, age cannot wither for you or custom stale.

"Above green-flashing plunges of a weir, and shaken by the thunder below, lilies, golden and white, were swaying at anchor among the reeds. Meadow-sweet hung from the banks thick with weed and trailing bramble, and there also hung a daughter of earth. Her face was shaded by a broad straw hat of flexible brim that left her lips and chin in the sun, and, sometimes nodding, sent forth a light of promising eyes. Across her shoulders, and behind, flowed large loose curls, brown in shadow, almost golden where the ray touched them. She was simply dressed, befitting decency and the season. On a closer inspection you might see that her lips were stained. This blooming young person was regaling on dewberries. They grew between the bank and the water. . . . . The little skylark went up above her, all song, to the smooth southern cloud lying along the blue: from a dewy copse standing dark over her nodding hat the blackbird fluted, calling to her with thrice mellow note: the king-fisher flashed emerald out of green osiers: a bow-winged heron travelled aloft, seeking solitude: a boat slipped toward her, containing a dreamy youth; and still she plucked the fruit, and ate, and mused, as if no fairy prince were invading her territories, and as if she wished not for one, or knew not her wishes. Surrounded by the green shaven meadows, the pastoral summer buzz, the weirfall's thundering white, amid the breath and

beauty of wild flowers, she was a bit of lovely human life in a fair setting; a terrible attraction. The Magnetic Youth leaned round to note his proximity to the weir-piles, and beheld the sweet vision. Stiller and stiller grew nature, as at the meeting of two electric clouds. . . . . To-morrow this place will have a memory—the river and the meadow, and the white falling weir: his heart will build a temple here; and the skylark will be its high-priest, and the old black-bird its glossy-gowned chorister, and there will be a a sacred repast of dewberries."

There is only one other passage in the whole of Mr. Meredith's novels that at all approaches this in its passionate rapture,—Sandra Belloni's meeting of Wilfrid Pole at Wilming Weir in the moonlight; though there is another wondrous wooing, passionate in another way—that where first meeting, wooing and winning, all in one short night, carry one along as Clotilde felt herself carried, "on the back of a centaur"—that great imperious wooing of the great Alvan. I only speak here of the greatest, for in every book he has written some notes of that same intensity thrill us, and there is none where the theme of love is not handled both with a subtlety and a poetry such as it is no exaggeration to say is new to fiction. There is no more striking characteristic of Mr. Meredith's work than his treatment of love. Probably the root of his originality lies in his recking his own rede by treating him as an honest god, and dabbling not with the sentimental

rouge. "He has," as a critic in *The Athenæum* has pointed out, "studied sex, that great leaven of art." And he has done so fearlessly. He has not feared to face the physiological basis of passion, those "reddened sources" from which Diana shrank. "What if" her "poetic ecstacy . . . had not been of origin divine? had sprung from other than spiritual founts? had sprung from the reddened sources she was compelled to conceal?" What if! echoes Mr. Meredith, with the glowing eye of a poet's faith. Is that morning glory by the river any other than glory, however it came? And, is it not because of his frank acceptance of that physical sanctity, of that bodily sacrament and of the chaste sensuousness that breathes through his expression of them, delicate and sweet as the incense that flutters from a young girl's gown, that such passages as that I have quoted come to us with so new a magic. They are irresistible as Lucy herself. His pictures of young married felicity, and especially of young wifehood, in the same book, are full of the same beauty, and surely, never laughter so delicious rippled around another honeymoon save Lucy's and Richard's.

"'Oh, my own Richard!' the fair girl just breathed.

He whispered, 'call me that name.'
She blushed deeply.
'Call me that,' he repeated. 'You said it once to day.'
'Dearest!'
'Not that.'
'O darling!'
'Not that.'
'Husband!'
She was won. The rosy gate from which the word had issued was closed with a seal."

We owe much of this playfulness to 'the wise youth,' Adrian Harley, most delightful of all cynics, whom one could forgive twice his cynicism for half his wit, he who procured Richard and Ripton an extra bottle one evening, because "he liked studying intoxicated urchins," and who on a momentous occasion in Richard's career, when his earnest cousin Austin reproached him for his apathy, with "the boy's fate is being decided now," could yawn out the incomparable retort "so is everybody's, my dear Austin!"

This Adrian, with what I cannot but feel great superficiality of judgment, has by some been taken to represent Mr. Meredith himself. Mr. W. L. Courtney, in a notable article in *The Fortnightly Review*, was, I believe, the first to propound the identity, and he certainly tries his contention by the strongest possible test, the Ferdinand and Miranda idyll, seeking to prove

that even there the cynic shadow of "the middle-aged spectator" is present. But is this so? He finds it in the title Mr. Meredith has given to the second of these chapters—"A Diversion played on a Penny Whistle."

After quoting a few beautiful lines from it, he says "but listen to the irony of the description of such a scene—'a diversion on a penny whistle.'" The *irony?* Why, surely Mr. Courtney must have strangely interpreted the passage which runs thus—

"Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, a sheep-boy pipes to meditative eve on a penny-whistle. Love's musical instrument is as old, and as poor: it has but two stops; and yet, you see, the cunning musician does thus much with it!"

If this means anything, is it not rather a tribute to the miracle of it all than a sneer, the ever present miracle of nature's transfiguring uses of what in our foolishness we so often regard as common and mean, because the wonder of it has been lost by familiarity. Can anyone imagine Adrian writing this concluding apostrophe?

"Pipe no more, Love, for a time! Pipe as you will you cannot express their first kiss; nothing of its sweetness, and of the sacredness of it nothing. St. Cecilia up aloft, before the organ pipes of Paradise, pressing fingers upon all the notes of which Love is but one, from her you may hear it."

Oh, no! Mr. Meredith is not Adrian Harley, or no few of us have read him to strange purpose

and are yet to be enlightened, for, it has surely seemed that we have drawn more strength and joy from him than ever yet was yielded by make-believe. It is probably Mr. Meredith's ubiquitous comic spirit that has laid him open to this misunderstanding, to controvert which, perhaps, it were only necessary to remark that a man like Adrian could never have been sufficiently in earnest to write novels at all. Anyhow, I, for one, must take Mr. Meredith seriously, and if that should seem a comic attitude to Mr. Courtney—he must have his smile.

Besides this treatment of the theme of love, *Richard Feverel* is a typical book in other ways; and if *The Egoist* be taken to stand for the one thing Mr. Meredith can preeminently do, *Richard Feverel* certainly illustrates the variety of his achievement in more familiar fields. He can not only embody new types, but can animate the old ones with hardly less success. Mrs. Berry would have been a feather even in Dickens' cap, had there been room for more in that 'forest of feathers.' Its most striking characteristic next to style is probably its vivid dramatic quality. It is possible that owing to the very narrow sense in which the word dramatic is too often

used—confining it exclusively to objective tableaux, as though the subjective made no demand on the dramatic!—it may surprise some to learn that Mr. Meredith can describe a fight as vigorously as Charles Reade has done. Undeniably he can do so, and there is hardly a book of his which does not afford examples of the power. *Rhoda Fleming* is a novel full of 'situations,' the one book I think of Mr. Meredith's which could be dramatised, if it be a compliment to say so. *Vittoria* is doubtless his one great achievement in the objective dramatic. What professed historian could have given us such a picture of that great Austro-Italian struggle. From whom could we have hoped for an impartiality that never leaves us in a moment's doubt as to the writer's vivid sympathies, and yet engages his powers as conscientiously in behalf of Austria as of Italia—winning our sympathy for a Colonel Weisspress no less than for an Angelo Guidascarpi. Rare too are the historians who give us scenes like the night at La Scala, or the duel in the Stelvio Pass.

Of one great engine of the dramatic, dialogue, I have already referred to Mr. Meredith as a master. And it is a mistake to think that he can only write the subtle epigrammatic conversation

of some of his sublimated types, for he is no less successful in those encounters where words follow each other like blows. One quality of his dialogue to which "B. V." has drawn attention is its atmosphere. Missing this, one must often miss meaning as well. Mr. Meredith has observed that two talking do not speak to the mere words uttered, but to all the *nuances* that accompany them, and then the various niceties of impression in the mind of the one addressed must be taken into account; so, that without sense of the atmosphere, and ability to use one's imagination a little, the connection between question and answer is not always obvious. One must have some intuition for secondary meanings, and come prepared to make a running interpretative gloss underneath the mere words as we read, as Mr. Meredith has done for the reader in one simple dialogue between Rhoda and Robert, and which it will be *apropos* to quote here.

"'I've always thought you were born to be a lady.' (You had that ambition, madam.)

She answered: 'That's what I don't understand.' (Your saying it, O my friend!)

'You will soon take to your new duties.' (You have small objection to them even now.)

'Yes, or my life won't be worth much.' (Know, that you are driving me to it.)

'And I wish you happiness, Rhoda.' (You are madly imperilling the prospect thereof.)

To each of them the second meaning stood shadowy behind the utterances. And further:

'Thank you, Robert.' (I shall have to thank you for the issue.)

'Now it's time to part.' (Do you not see that there is a danger for me in remaining?)

'Good night.' (Behold, I am submissive.)

'Good night, Rhoda.' (You were the first to give the signal of parting.)

'Good night.' (I am simply submissive.)

'Why not my name? Are you hurt with me?'

Rhoda choked. The indirectness of speech had been a shelter to her, permitting her to hint at more than she dared clothe in words.

Again the delicious dusky rose glowed beneath his eyes.

But he had put his hand out to her and she had not taken it.

'What have I done to offend you? I really don't know, Rhoda.'

'Nothing.' The flower had closed."

Distinctions, however, between Mr. Meredith's markedly subjective and objective novels are apt to be misleading, they are but accidental; for, whether the novel be one chiefly of 'action' like *Vittoria*, or of analysis as *The Egoist*, Mr. Meredith's one concern is still the spiritual issue. If he is not engaged in translating the subjective into the objective, he is tracing the objective back to its subjective springs. As with the poet of *Sordello*, nothing is valuable to him except in its relation to the history of a soul, the one thing worth study. This then is his one great motive, and in all his novels, whatever stir and action

there may be, this is the ruling power. So much does one feel this passion in them, that one would not be surprised to hear that he wrote them first purely for the sake of settling certain problems to his own satisfaction, producing a work of art on the way. It is this great organic sincerity in his work that makes it so important, and compels us to take it so seriously. One feels that it has not been manufactured but has grown. It has nothing in common with those clever 'sets' on our shelves, which might just as easily have been in thirty as twenty volumes, had the novelist possessed more horsepower. This organic feeling animates every line, each word seems to have fallen inevitably as and where it is; which, after all, is but to say that we are dealing with literature. Once again we see sincerity as the root of style, and the last word as the first for Mr. Meredith is his style. He has that great manner of the masters which is not to be aped, by virtue of which he rears his "figure of easy and superb preponderance" among our living novelists. Sharing all their brilliant parts, he possesses in addition such mature dignity as striplings envy in 'set' manhood, that 'weight' which is another than heaviness He has all their sparkle, but 'body'

such as they have not—"To port for that!" His method of telling a story is a singular fusion of new and old. A master of the modern impressionist method, he is as deliberate as Fielding, and thus unites the distinctive strength of each manner. He constantly loves to flash in a phrase and then make sure in a paragraph, and this contrast of intensity and deliberation gives a great piquancy to his writing. He spares no pains to reach his reader, to make him as wise as himself, and his back-grounds and accessories are each and all finished with the same conscientious industry as the front of the picture. One is sometimes tempted to wish this were not so, thinking, maybe, that the energy expended in perfecting familiar types might have been blood in the veins of another Sir Willoughby. But Sir Willoughbys, as we have seen, must have their dependents; and the gift of ten novels, in each of which there is at least one commanding creation, is surely no small generosity to one's generation, which possesses them too in a medium so precious for its own sake as Mr. Meredith's prose.

III.—"THE COMIC MUSE."

THERE is nothing more essential to a consideration of Mr. Meredith's novels than a right understanding of his "idea of comedy." For, many of his creations have been conceived under its direct inspiration and all under its supervision, while the ultimate subtlety of its working is to be traced in the vital influence it has undoubtedly exercised on his style. It is probably as much to that sensitiveness as to any other that we owe the entire absence of commonplace expression in his writing; his keen nerve for what Dr. Holmes has called the polarisation of words detects for him, in the earliest stage of the comic process, what it is common to feel but in the exaggerated cases of prosers talking platitudes with an air, or in the presence of good folk capable of quoting "the cup that cheers" in all solemnity. To posture in outworn expression is as ludicrous as swaggering in a threadbare coat, and to lead out

a tottering phrase with the same sprightly gallantry we would show to one in the bloom of its first season has added a deep touch of the pathetic. If "our new thoughts have thrilled dead bosoms," we need not dress them from mouldy wardrobes. It will, therefore, be understood that one who has thus an eye for the comic in the microscopic features of a word, will not when he comes to consider the larger laughableness of men and women, give us simply a hurly-burly comicality after the pattern of those modern humourists who distort life instead of reflecting it, and pass from volume to volume in one long quest of new forms of sacrilege. The great difference between such and the author of *The Egoist* is that they have to make their 'comedy,' whereas for the latter it inheres in all things as vitally as poetry and as diffused as sunshine. It needs but the eye to see, and the hand to fix it for us in art, with no more conventionalising than the exigencies of the art make absolute; for, said Adrian Harley, "no art arrives at the artlessness of nature in matters of comedy." But, indeed, there is no matter on which the majority of men are more completely benighted than this of comedy; the idea that the comic is in the laugh

rather than the laughed at is of no restricted prevalence. It is, in short, continually confused with its vassal, humour, and few have any idea of the delicious smiles of the muse behind that mask "labelled for broad guffaw."

Whoso is wiser than the rest is probably indebted to Mr. Meredith for much of his enlightenment, and if he did not hear or has not read that lecture on "The Idea of Comedy and the uses of the Comic Spirit" delivered at the London Institution, February, and printed in *The New Quarterly Magazine*, April, 1877, he has not read the first chapter of *The Egoist* in vain. In the former, Mr. Meredith's ever keen instinct for differentiation gives us distinctions valuable as these.

"If you detect the ridicule, and your kindliness is chilled by it, you are slipping into the grasp of satire.

If, instead of falling foul of the ridiculous person with a satiric rod, to make him writhe and shriek aloud, you prefer to sting him under a semi-caress, by which he shall in his anguish be rendered dubious whether indeed anything has hurt him, you are an engine of irony.

If you laugh all round him, tumble him, roll him about, deal him a smack, and drop a tear on him, own his likeness to you and yours to your neighbour, spare him as little as you shun him, pity him as much as you expose, it is a spirit of humour that is moving you.

The comic, which is the perceptive, is the governing spirit awakening and giving aim to these powers of laughter, but it is

not to be confounded with them: it enfolds a thinner form of them."

And preceding these definitions Mr. Meredith had written:—

"You may estimate your capacity for comic perception by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love, without loving them less: and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes."

It is just in this spirit that Mr. Meredith laughs at men and women, loving or pitying them all the same. The best illustration of the difference between his comedy and that of the modern 'humourist' is his treatment of the theme of love. To the latter there would seem to be something convulsive in the idea of love itself, and a love scene, however managed, intrinsically the funniest thing in the world.

Thus it has become all but impossible to play even "Romeo and Juliet" without cynicism in the stalls, and horse-laughter from the pit. Such cynicism and such laughter have no relation to the comic spirit—except, indeed, as subjects of it, for at cynicism the gods themselves laugh, and the mirth of pits is purely ventral; whereas, of course, the laughter of the muse ripples first, if not solely, in her brain, softly as the out-pouring of wine. To see "where" indeed "the laugh

comes in" is a rare quality, perhaps hardly indigenous in Britain—around whose mere name, as one writes it, there seems, in truth, a lambent light of the comic. In this matter of love, as in all subjects of the muse, it is not, of course, the fact that it is laughable, but the falsehood in which it parades. For, "if," says Mr. Meredith, "she watches over sentimentalism with a birch-rod, she is not opposed to romance. You may love, and warmly love, so long as you are honest. Do not offend reason. A lover pretending too much by one foot's length of pretence, will have that foot caught in her trap." It is not at Lucy and Richard by the river that the muse smiles, she smiles *on* them, motherwise, may be, not at the great passion of a Sandra, but the poor make-believe of a Wilfrid Pole, who "could pledge himself to eternity, but shrank from being bound to eleven o'clock on the morrow morning," and could wonder if there was not a shade too much confidence in Sandra's cry of "my lover!"

Truth, indeed, life as it is, is the one great desire of the comic muse, and to whip men back to that does she carry her lash of laughter. Her great gift is an eye for proportion, to sins against which, in one way or another, all comic attitudes may be traced.

The measure of the disproportion decides the quality of the laughter which she calls forth to ridicule and rectify it. She does not necessarily laugh herself,—'inclined to smile' probably represents the extent of her own humourous demonstrativeness,—nor need we, she but appeals to our brain to recognise the anomaly, whence may or may not run a summons to the powers of laughter. But let us beware lest in our laughter we commit the very sin which raised it, for though all laughter, the most benighted, must arise primarily from an, at least, imagined comic perception, in most the maximum is on the wrong side. Over-laughing, the sin of the 'hypergelast' as Mr. Meredith terms him, is even less tolerable to the muse than that of the 'agelast,' he who will not

'Show his teeth in way of smile
Though Nestor swore the jest be laughable,'

and if we are guilty of it, the muse will but send out another laughter upon ours, which in its turn may need chastening; a good illustration of her primarily perceptive quality, and the process by which "the original big round satyr's laugh" is sublimated in time to "the slim feasting smile" of the muse. When we have learnt the secret of fine laughter, to do as much of it in the brain as

possible, and when the comic conception is so mighty as to need all powers of laughter in heart and brain, "the laugh will come again" says Mr. Meredith, "but it will be of the order of the smile."

Mr. Meredith's comedy, need one say, is of that order. He rarely enlists humour in the presentation of his comic perceptions, never in the most important of them. These latter are, as ever, the less obviously and, therefore, the more exquisitely comic types of humanity; respectabilities and complacencies, the humour of which is not visible to the average naked eye, a subtle aura needing for its detection a certain gift, so to say, of comic clairvoyance. Types in whom many will not "for the life of them," be able to see "what there is to laugh at," such as Matthew Arnold used to meet travelling "on the Woodford branch in large numbers." Matthew Arnold, by the way, with that exquisitely reticent smile of his might stand for Mr. Meredith's "idea of comedy" made flesh. Perhaps the one representative of this complacent class for all ages was the man who, in days long past, was wont to say "*Civis Romanum Sum*," with an air, though his advantage over a modern parallel to whom the

Bank of England is among the eternal verities, is doubtless one of priority alone.

Mr. Meredith is a Copernican in a world yet peopled for the most part by Ptolemaists, men without Jupiter in their lives. And, from this living without Jupiter come all those forms of tradesmanlike seriousness with regard to life, as opposed to the great seriousness; all forms of taking existence for more and, therefore, for less than it is: all that disproportion which it is the function of the comic muse to adjust.

Sir Willoughby Patterne, as we have already seen, is Mr. Meredith's typical comic figure. He is so both in subject and in the manner of his presentation. The delicacy of the latter must surely represent the ultimate reserve of comic treatment. Pushed a shade beyond that, it would have been impossible to discover any artistic intention whatever, so little does Sir Willoughby betray the medium of his embodiment. The comedy of him is hardly more defined than the pathos, which is really quite undefined and left for the reader to discover; and though there can be no doubt that the comic was the muse to give him to us, he is, indeed, only just hers.

The treatment of Roy Richmond, Mr. Mere-

dith's other great comic figure, is no less delicate, though proportionately broader. It approaches a shade nearer to the absolutely humourous, and, in keeping, its pathos is more on the surface. If we must place him second to Sir Willoughby, it is only as a subject, for in the matter of presentation they seem to me equals; but, whereas one is a wholly new type, the other is the comparatively familiar one of the great adventurer. Whether or not, however, there has been such an adventurer in fiction before, I leave to the school of comparative criticism, though I must commit myself to the extent of expressing surprise at the odd caution with which a certain critic who is not wont to be timid sets Roy Richmond alongside Barry Lyndon, with the air of paying him a compliment!

To my mind such a juxtaposition is anything but that. I have always looked upon Thackeray's Irishman as a broad charcoal caricature, and little to boast of as that, and I certainly fail to see any common basis of comparison between him and a careful characterisation such as Roy Richmond. If burlesque and comic art—Mr. Burnand and Molière—are one and the same, it may be discoverable.

Both these figures, of Sir Willoughby and Roy Richmond, strike, as we have seen, that minor note, which I think it is generally admitted every great comic figure does strike. All such are, indeed, somewhat of "tragic comedians." The Muse "hastens to smile lest she should weep." "A tragic comedian" says Mr. Meredith, of Alvan, "that is, a great pretender, a self-deceiver, one of the lividly ludicrous, whom we cannot laugh at, but must contemplate, to distinguish where their character strikes the note of discord with life." But the measure of the disproportion to life of a soul of such high seriousness as Alvan's, though it may come under the observation of the comic spirit, is not a subject for comic treatment, however delicate; it belongs to the other hemisphere of art, and comedy has really such part in it as pathos has in more distinctly comic figures. There is that touch of the infinite in his bearing before which whatever faint comic suggestiveness there may be in him, laughter must give place to a more serious regard. If he is not of the gods, he is a demi-god, and the true comic figure is a mortal of mortals.

Of Mr. Meredith's treatment of "the simple

order of the comic," that Dr. Middleton before referred to is probably the freshest study.

Doubtless the relationship which has been pointed out between him and Dr. Folliott in Peacock's *Crotchet Castle* is real, though his type was, after all, hardly Peacock's copyright, and charming as the latter's doctor is, he must give way in flesh and blood realisation to Dr. Middleton. Peacock's characters are always too obvious personifications for one to feel much life in them, though they might appeal more nearly to one if they were not ticketted with such unmistakable labels, not to say placards, behind which the man is lost sight of to begin with. Whatever may be said against Dr. Middleton's phraseology, and he does on one occasion refer to his daughter as a "fantastical planguncula," he is certainly alive. The well-known scene wherein Sir Willoughby and he discuss that "aged and great wine" is probably the best example of Mr. Meredith's use of humour, rich and yet characteristically restrained, to be found in his novels. Fortunately it is also the most quotable.

Sir Willoughby "raised a key to the level of Dr. Middleton's breast, remarking: 'I am going down to my inner cellar.'

'An inner cellar!' exclaimed the doctor.

'Sacred from the butler. It is interdicted to Stoneman. Shall I offer myself as guide to you? My cellars are worth a visit.'

'Cellars are not catacombs. They are, if rightly constructed, rightly considered, cloisters, where the bottle meditates on joys to bestow, not on dust misused! Have you anything great?'

'A wine aged ninety.'

'Is it associated with your pedigree, that you pronounce the age with such assurance?'

'My grandfather inherited it.'

'Your grandfather, Sir Willoughby, had meritorious offspring, not to speak of generous progenitors. What would have happened, had it fallen into the female line? I shall be glad to accompany you. Port? Hermitage?'

'Port!'

'Ah! we are in England!'"

Then again in the library, seated, with the decanter between them.

"Dr. Middleton eyed the decanter. There is a grief in gladness for premonition of our mortal state. The amount of wine in the decanter did not promise to sustain the starry roof of night and greet the dawn. 'Old wine, my friend, denies us the full bottle!'

'Another bottle is to follow.'

'No!'

'It is ordered.'

'I protest.'

'It is uncorked.'

'I entreat.'

'It is decanted.'

'I submit. But, mark, it must be honest partnership. You are my worthy host, sir, on that stipulation. Note the superiority of wine over Venus!—I may say, the magnanimity of wine; our jealousy turns on him that will not share! But the corks, Willoughby. The corks excite my amazement.'

'The corking is examined at regular intervals. I remember the occurrence in my father's time. I have seen to it once.'

'It must be perilous as an operation for tracheotomy; which I should assume it to resemble in surgical skill and firmness of hand, not to mention the imminent gasp of the patient.'

A fresh decanter was placed before the doctor.

He said: 'I have but a girl to give!' He was melted."

Another type I do not remember to have seen set forth so well before is that of Algernon Blancove in *Rhoda Fleming*, an example of the not uncommon weak-minded young fool who used to buy cigars "to save himself from excesses in charity," yet was not without the alternatives of his vacillating temperament, for "he'd aim at a cock-sparrow, and be glad if he missed." Of what may be termed the 'stock' rôles of the comic, all those types known on the stage as 'character parts,' Mr. Meredith has a full company. He can give us boys and their solemn absurdities, country folk, old men and women and eccentrics of various kinds, in a way that, to state one's opinion in minimum, makes it quite worth our while watching them.

"I growed at a farm, and you don't go to tell ne'er a tree t'walk"—"He was very much in harmony with universal nature, if to be that is the secret of human life"—"the reply was evidently a mile distant and had not started"—"a sheepskin old Time writes his nothings on"

—these are phrases belonging to and descriptive of that Master Gammon who used to annoy housekeeper Sumfit by the relentless patience with which on dumpling-days, he would sit and absorb dumpling after dumpling, till exasperated beyond patience she would cry "when *do* you think you'll have done, Mas' Gammon," and after due delay he would reply "when I feel my buttons, marm." This Master Gammon and the countryman in *Diana* who "could eat hog for a solid hower" have been the subjects of comparative discussion here and there, to which I will not add more than to say that one is too apt to write of countrymen as though there was but one fixed type of them—whereas, of course, they are as various in character as other vegetables. This Master Gammon, certainly, to my mind, embodies in a humour as direct as it is quaint, some of the most striking traits of the more primitive class of farm-labourer, that human nullity who has only to stand still to be taken for a gnarled gate-post, and through whom the formation of man "from the dust of the ground" comes to seem a not unlikely thing.

In his humourous characterisation, as elsewhere, it will be seen that Mr. Meredith does most

of his work by phrases, though, as I have said, he seldom fails to supplement his first vivid impression of a leading trait by a patient fulness of studied detail, a rare solicitude for the reader. But it is the first phrases that always give us the firmest grasp, the deepest insight, and it is by that that the character lives in our minds. If one thinks again of the hapless Barrett in *Sandra Belloni* it will be, I think, because he looked "as if he had been a gentleman in another world and was the ghost of one in this," and despite the careful portrait of Anthony Hackbut in *Rhoda Fleming*, it is towards the end of the book that we know him best, when he accepts a glass of wine from Robert, not because he really cared about it, but because he could not deny himself "the tender ecstacy of being paid for." This Anthony Hackbut is an example, though not the best, of Mr. Meredith's use of the fantastic, that "Arabian Night" faculty which in him is very strong, and of which we feel the more serious spell in such a chapter as "An Enchantress," in *Richard Feverel.* Mr. Romfrey's odd jumbled dream while dozing near Beauchamp's sick-bed is a good example of it; better still those make-believe stories wherein Roy Richmond used to

take such liberties of juxtaposition with various characters of history and drama for the benefit of his dear boy Harry.

"'Great Will' my father called Shakespeare, and 'Slender Billy' Pitt. The scene where Great Will killed the deer, dragging Falstaff all over the park after it by the light of Bardolph's nose, upon which they put an extinguisher if they heard any of the keepers, and so left everbody groping about and catching the wrong person, was the most wonderful mixture of fun and tears. Great Will was extremely youthful, but everybody in the park called him 'Father William'; and when he wanted to know which way the deer had gone, King Lear (or else my memory deceives me) pursued and Lady Macbeth waved a handkerchief for it to be steeped in the blood of the deer; Shylock ordered one pound of the carcase; Hamlet (I cannot say why, but the fact was impressed upon me), offered him a three-legged stool; and a number of kings and knights and ladies lit their torches from Bardolph; and away they flew, distracting the keepers and leaving Will and his troop to the deer. That poor thing died from a different weapon at each recital, though always with a flow of blood and a successful dash of his antlers into Falstaff; and to hear Falstaff bellow! But it was mournful to hear how sorry Great Will was over the animal he had slain. He spoke like music. I found it pathetic in spite of my knowing that the whole scene was lighted up by Bardolph's nose, when I was just bursting out crying—for the deer's tongue was lolling out and quick pantings were at his side; he had little ones at home—Great Will remembered his engagement to sell Shylock a pound of the carcase; determined that no Jew should eat of it, he bethought him that Falstaff could well spare a pound, and he said the Jew would not see the difference; Falstaff only got off by hard running and roaring out that he knew his unclean life would make him taste like pork and thus let the Jew into the trick."

This is delightful nonsense, and the faculty of improvisation which it witnesses must, of course,

have been Mr. Meredith's before it was Roy Richmond's, in whose history it swayed such a power of charm; but the crowning example of such is *The Shaving of Shagpat*, that gnomic book which the very clever will doubtless persist in interpreting as a satirical allegory, but which one can be well content to take according to its label—"an Arabian entertainment." Its fantasy, however, is not its only attraction, probably its subtlest fascination is a purely literary one, such as we enjoy in that most delicate parody which is the barely heightened reproduction of the thing itself. Nothing could be more delicious than Mr. Meredith's imitation of the Oriental phraseology, and the cleverness with which he has caught the manner of the Arabian story-teller in every particular, even to all the various styles of the indispensable quotations "in the words of the poet."

The very title of the first chapter—"The Thwackings"—is a triumph, and the opening lines give a most appetising foretaste of what is to follow.

"It was ordained that Shibli Bagarag, nephew to the renowned Baba Mustapha, chief barber to the Court of Persia, should shave Shagpat, the son of Shimpoor, the son of Shoolpi, the son of Shullum; and they had been clothiers for generations, even to the time of Shagpat, illustrious.

Now the story of Shibli Bagarag, and of the ball he followed, and of the subterranean kingdom he came to, and of the enchanted palace he entered, and of the sleeping king he shaved, and of the two princesses he released, and of the Afrite held in subjection by the arts of one and bottled by her, is it not known as 'twere written on the finger-nails of men and traced in their corner robes? As the poet says:

Ripe with oft telling and old is the tale,
But 'tis of the sort that can never grow stale."

And what, in its way, could be better than the description of "a woman, old, wrinkled, a very crone, with but room for the drawing of a thread between her nose and her chin." But, in addition to this pervading humourous value, there are many passages of serious beauty, the love-scenes in "Bhanavar the Beautiful," for example; and some of the snatches of song therein are quite exquisite, though those, of course, are not our present concern. That quality of delicate parody is more to the point, as indicative of a power of humourous phrase, that purely literary humour which consists rather in quaintness of statement than in subject matter, in which Mr. Meredith's writing is peculiarly rich. It is, indeed, in that all pervading piquancy of verbal flavour, and his use of comedy as "a criticism of life" in its more conventional and highly-cultivated forms, that we must look for Mr. Meredith's most original inspiration from the Comic Muse.

IV.—"THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP."

THE title which, in the first instance, belongs to Sir Austin Feverel's volume of apothegms, may well stand for all those considerable riches, making, perhaps, the bulk of Mr. Meredith's wealth, which exist in the form of aphoristic gold pieces, and sentences readily negotiable as quotation, throughout his novels.

An American lady has so applied it to a very charming collection of Meredithian "wit and wisdom" for which alone one sighs the lack of an international copyright.

As originally used it denotes a collection of what pagan Elizabethans, anxious to make their peace before the end, would have called "Divine Epigrams," but for us to so confine it in considering Mr. Meredith would be pedantic, as there are as many wise things outside as within it. It forms, indeed, but one of Mr. Meredith's many

excuses for being witty,—Dr. Middleton, Adrian Harley, Stukeley Culbrett, Mrs. Mountstuart, and others,—which are as efficient, however, in the Danae-shower of his wit, as half-a-dozen basins spread to catch a day's rainfall from the South West. One sometimes wonders why he should have taken the trouble to provide these mouth-pieces, for he is just as shamelessly witty without them, and probably his best things are said in *propria persona.*

But, while making use of the label, "The Pilgrim's Scrip," to stand for the bulk of Mr. Meredith's phrase-making, sacred and profane, that is for his wit as a power apart from its several working, it would be as well to bear in mind its secondary, more exact, meaning too. "Who rises from prayer a better man his prayer is answered" is, of course, the product of precisely the same power as that which armed Diana with her "arrowy phrases" and gave Adrian his caustic tongue; as, for example, the sensuousness of a Crashaw and a Keats is much the same, although one dedicated his to the Virgin and the other to Cynthia. Yet there is a strong physiognomical difference in the products which one wishes to have marked.

If "The Pilgrim's Scrip" be kept apart for the "sacred" side of Mr. Meredith's wit, he has given us no such general heading for his "profanities"; so will it seem profane in me to suggest "Diana's Quiver" in default of a better.

Under two such fanciful labels one could speedily classify all his good things,—"The Pilgrim's Scrip" to represent the earnest wisdom of his wit, "Diana's Quiver" the more playful satiric aspect of it.

This gift of phrase-making is Mr. Meredith's most generally known quality, one of his commentators considers him the greatest wit in English Literature, and says that Sheridan is "not visible beside him"; but unsympathetic critics do not seem to regard this as a high compliment, for I have noticed that this one quality they will allow to our author they delight to belittle, saying that proverb-making "is no great game" and that only an inferior type of genius runs into aphorism. When one remembers that the greatest writers practically live for the vulgar by a preeminent faculty of that nature, one may be pardoned for holding a different opnion, and at least one cannot be wrong in feeling that the aphorism is too small a field on which to decide

so great an issue as the measure of genius. After all too Mr. Meredith himself, with that unfailing manysidedness born of his comic perception, is before them in detraction. All that can be said against his particular vice he has expressed in phrases that give it no mercy.

"A maker of proverbs—what is he but a narrow mind the mouthpiece of a narrower . . . consider the sort of minds influenced by set sayings. A proverb is the half-way house to an idea, I conceive; and the majority rest there content: can the keeper of such a house be flattered by his company." This is his severe judgment on Sir Austin Feverel, upon whose foible he is continually turning a humourous eye; and, in like manner, Diana is made to regard the "lapidary sentences" of her own special gift as having merely "the value of chalk-eggs, which lure the thinker to sit."

A warning against the exhibition of detached examples of wit in that same famous first chapter is no less applicable to the "wisdom" of George Meredith than it was to that of Dan Merion's sparkling daughter. It can only be truly known in a body, for it is the many-coloured product of a most peculiarly complicated per-

sonality, Mr. Meredith being so alive on all sides of his nature that he has given us utterances from every contradictory standpoint.

It would be hard to conceive, indeed, a personality whose component parts are at once so many and so various, and yet wrought together into so subtly harmonious a whole. Mr. Meredith has probably the most perfectly balanced mind of any great modern, at once so capable of high enthusiasm, and so rich in common sense. He is another example of the sanity of the poet. He has an unexampled gift of logic, and nothing gives him greater amusement than the spectacle of illogicality in any form. He simply cannot understand the denial of fact for any purpose whatsoever; and the habitual abnegation of it for spiritual purposes is a strange puzzle to him. For, he himself is able still to remain a transcendentalist, while welcoming all, and materialism but inspires him with "a sensual faith in the upper glories."

He is capable of frenzies fine as those of any poet of the century, and yet he has all that coolness of head, that dispassionate judgment, which popular superstition attributes to the man of science—qualities which, one need hardly say,

the actual man of science (who is nothing if not a poet gone wrong) is pathetically innocent of.

He is our first scientific student of human nature, and has all the student's high scorn of sentimental shrinking from diagnosis, that which sees and then rushes away "to interchange liftings of hands at the sight, instead of patiently studying the phenomenon of energy."*

"Dealing with subjects of this nature emotionally," said Percy Dacier, "does not advance us a calculable inch." He never regrets, he has a too everpresent sense of law. "It was a quality going, and a quality coming;" he writes of the

* I cannot forbear reference here to the scathingly sarcastic treatment of this attitude in the sonnet entitled "Whimper of Sympathy," printed in the *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life.*

"Hawk or shrike has done this deed
Of downy feathers: rueful sight!
Sweet sentimentalist, invite
Your bosom's power to intercede.

So hard it seems that one must bleed
Because another needs must bite:
All round we find cold Nature slight
The feelings of the totter-knee'd.

O it were pleasant, with you
To fly from this tussle of foes,
The shambles, the charnel, the wrinkle:
To dwell in yon dribble of dew
On the cheek of your sovereign rose,
And live the young life of a twinkle."

passing away of Sandra's first maidenly simplicity, "nor will we, if you please, lament a law of growth."

The natural result of this manysidedness is that one finds him claimed by men of the most diverse intellectual complexion. The modern young cynic hails him as master, imitates his brilliancy in many well-known columns, and yet the most earnest of our living workers claim him for their own.

It is odd that the imputation of cynicism which has long been the one criticism of ignorant mediocrity upon Thackeray should have attached itself to Mr. Meredith also. Indeed the word "cynic" is the one missile of a public which flees in nervous terror at the earliest indication of satire. It never waits to see against whom it is directed, it is sufficient that it be clever to draw down the popgun pellet. As a matter of fact there is no more foundation for the charge against Mr. Meredith than there was against the warm-hearted editor of *Cornhill.*

His faith in humanity is no less firm than his faith in life, and one may be sure he would never have taken the trouble to scourge its follies had he not deemed it worth whipping. "Who is the

coward among us? He who sneers at the failings of humanity," wrote Sir Austin in his gilt-edged note-book. Again, in *The Egoist*,—"Cynicism is intellectual dandyism without the coxcomb's feathers, and it seems to me that cynics are only happy in making the world as barren to others as they have made it for themselves."

This charge of cynicism has arisen, doubtless, because Mr. Meredith is so enamoured of reality and refuses absolutely to be sentimental. "Sacred Reality," he names it in one of his poems—real beauty, real greatness, real religion. To him life is solemn with the fulness of these things, and of them he is ever ready to prophesy; while he is more than usually dowered with the prophetic "scorn of scorn" for the paltry imitations that usurp the worship of the world. Not Carlyle himself had a more white-hot hatred of "simulacra."

While his philosophy of life, as has been said, is one of faith, it is by no means easily so. In man's future he has a most absolute trust, but he none the less insists that man will have to work for it.

—"Only he
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

He has as little sentimental solace to offer man for his sorrows here as the sad-smiled poet just quoted. Growth is all he promises for struggle, "at war with ourselves . . . the best happiness." He is quite pitiless in the manner in which he strips him of his last "blanket of a dream," he will allow him none of his old comfortable excuses, and where he whines of fate, he points at folly. "You talk of Fate! Its the seed we sow individually or collectively." Fools "run jabbering of the irony of fate to escape the annoyance of tracing the causes." There is but one way, "expediency is man's wisdom. Doing right is God's."

"Man know thyself" is a phrase unfortunately associated with quacks of the medical profession, but it, nevertheless, is one reiterated lesson of "The Pilgrim's Scrip,"—"then *be* thyself" the other.

In turning from the matter to consider the manner of Mr. Meredith's phrase-making, one must not forget how, "like all rapid phrasers, Mrs. Mountstuart detested the analysis of her sentence. It had an outline in vagueness and was flung out to be apprehended, not dissected." Yet it may still be permissible to note a few

general characteristics which certainly contribute to give Mr. Meredith's phrases their unique flavour.

Its most marked quality is that already referred to, his quite abnormal instinct for analogy. This is no little coloured by the despised accomplishment of learning, which enables him to draw images from the most odd and out of the way places. Thus he writes of "a world where innocence is as poor a guarantee as a babe's caul against shipwreck," and talks of "words big and oddly garbed as the pope's body-guard." By reason of the same old fashioned accomplishment he is able to make use of the technicalities of scientific and artistic knowledge, as in that helpful aphorism from *Diana*—"The light of every soul burns upward. Let us allow for atmospheric disturbance," or in a somewhat irritating fashion in passages such as that in which "Crossjay's voice ran up and down a diatonic scale, with here and there a query in semitone and a laugh on a ringing note."

He loves to send metaphor, Ariel-like, to the ends of the earth for the mere pleasure of fantastical juxtaposition, the result being a kind of literary grotesque which all who have feeling for

style for its own sake relish, perhaps, more than anything in his writing. Such phrases stand out like gurgoyles in all his books. When for instance a snore is described as "the elfin trumpet of silence," or a country feast as "the nuptials of beef and beer"; when in that charming scene of simple comedy in Lawyer Thompson's office, Ripton grew aware that his surreptitious studies in English fiction were being overlooked by his irate father, and the "proximity roused one of" his "senses, which blew a call to the others"; or when again in that dear moment when Redworth watched Diana kindling the fire at midnight in the lonely "Crossways," "a little mouse of a thought scampered out of one of the chambers of his head and darted along the passages, fetching a sweat to his brows."

It is also owing to his power of close metaphor, that his style has often a warm intimacy of phrase, in his dialogue a power of suggesting, so to say, the very physical conditions of the birth of a phrase; while his most beautiful bear a bloom tender beyond words. "She coloured like a sea-water shell"; a double wild cherry in bloom suggests "Alpine snows in noon—sunlight, a flush of white." "He pronounced 'Love' a little mod-

estly, as it were, a blush in his voice;" "the day was soft and still, the flowers gave light for light;" Sandra's face "was like the after-sunset across a rose-garden, with the wings of an eagle poised outspread on the light;" and after her song the stillness settled back again "like one folding up a precious jewel."

Of course, there are no few on whom some of these phrases and their like have no other effect than an irritation beyond mad bulls. To them they are simply violations of language, which, of course, they are, if man was made for the dictionary, and if we are to regard language as a fixed unchangeable institution, and not a fluid compromise to be modified by mortal convenience. Mr. Meredith, however, takes the latter view, to him language is but one big analogy; and when one remembers how troubled poor old Colonel Newcome used to be over Keats, and that, after all, the world has come to see with Clive and his friends, it gives one courage to side with him.

No few well-meaning people will tell one that it is not in the power of white to flush, and that a blush in the voice is an impossibility, that "hours" have never "crumbled slowly," and

thas there is no such thing as "the thread of a look"; to which one can only answer that there is evidently then no such thing as metaphor, or that it is their mission on earth, like Redworth's, to kill them on the wing.

It may be objected that such prose is open to the charge which lies against most modern art, and especially, perhaps, against music, of aiming beyond its particular genius, trying to do more than its conditions warrant,—of music to be pictorial, of painting to be poetical, and of prose to be the synthesis of all; but, nevertheless, the canons of an art are not eternal in the heavens, and whether it may legitimately add another stop to its compass "not argument but effort shall decide."

Of this there can be little doubt, that the continual demand of our modern intensity for expression that "bites" can no longer be met in literature by a simple use of words, and that, whether or not it be in excess of the need, Mr. Meredith's style is certainly an initiative in the direction of the necessary raising of language to its second and third powers.

In that power of compression which is the readiest road to force, in the manufacture, so to

say, of the literary cartridge, Mr. Meredith has no parallel except Browning. He almost stuns one at times with his perfectly crushing force, and any one of his books is as sternly invigorating as an electric bath.

As an example of the vitality that can be crushed into three little words there can be none more striking than that picture in "the Woods of Westermain" of

> "The print that shows
> Hasty outward-tripping toes,
> *Heels to terror*, on the mould."

The italics are, of course, mine. Such a phrase may be glibly sneered at, one, indeed, might quote Mr. Meredith's own characterisation of Alvan's writing and say that the telegraph is manifestly the model of such style, but do we really regret the lost particles, demonstrative pronouns or qualifying adjectives, with which another man would have made at least three lines of what is now but three words? One feels the same almost brutal power in such a phrase as that describing Attila's Huns in the *Nuptials of Attila*,—"those rock-faces hung with weed." And though these references here to his poetry may seem to be a little out of place, they may, on the other hand

introduce the question which Mr. Meredith's writing continually suggests to one,—whether this power of phrase is a specific prose characteristic. For my part, I think that if one were to suggest that Mr. Meredith was born for verse and made for prose, there would doubtless be found many to agree, and the reverse of the famous dictum of Matthew Arnold on Shelley might, I think, be risked in his case without much fear of derision. Verse, *per se*, has always a better chance of longevity than prose, the mere bulk of the latter being one drawback in the struggle for survival.

Then there is of necessity more lath-and-plaster work about prose, especially the novel, than verse, and it is really more a question of the relative durability of two forms of art, than an impossible comparison between the works themselves, that one has to settle in conjecture as to whether indeed posterity will know Mr. Meredith rather as the poet of *Modern Love* than the novelist of the Ego.

NOTE.—To any one who cares about the history of Mr. Meredith's phrases it may be interesting to note that Diana's fondness for 'antiques' dates back to *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper*, (from which, as has been pointed out elsewhere, comes the title of *One of our Conquerors*), one of those three uncollected stories of which that fine bit of tragic comedy, *The Tale of Chloe*, will someday, I hope, be reprinted.

V.—WOMAN IN THE NOVELS.

OF all the many matters on which Mr. Meredith has written, he has written on none so often, or with greater authority and charm, than on "that mystery the human heart Female." And was this not to be expected, for where should a style such as his find fuller scope than in the delineation of woman? In her complex individuality, indeed, it meets with a subject for which it has no redundant powers; for its subtlety her delicate psychology, and for its poetry is there not her beauty? Mr. Meredith has written of her in many moods, he has said sly and wicked things about her innumerable, wise things as many, and great and noble things no few. The former are best known; probably, because we still live in a masculine world, which delights not to quote against itself what woman can hardly quote in her own behalf.

"I expect that woman will be the last thing civilized by man" is often on its lips, apparently unsuspecting that the saying may be two-edged and the advantages of being "*civilized* by man" problematical; but it is silent as to how "primitive men abound and will have their pasture." Because Mr. Meredith often flirts with his subject, it would be a mistake indeed to think that his prevailing mood in regard to it is other than one of most utter seriousness—for, before one jests with him upon it, certain passages of "black earnest" in *The Egoist* have to be reckoned with. Certainly, no man has written more mercilessly against the brutal selfishness of his own sex in its relations with woman; by no means, however, on the platform of a modern "woman question," but from the point of view of a humanity far broader. Diana and her sister queens would hardly have won us had they been but pamphlets in petticoats. No, it is by their womanhood alone, in Mr. Meredith's art as in that of any other who has won like success, that they rule over us. If asked what is the quality that especially distinguishes Mr. Meredith's women, it would be no bad answer to say that they eat well and are not ashamed. In his

delineation of them his fearless adoption of the modern conception of the unity of body and spirit finds its poetry. No writer with whom I am acquainted has made us so realise "the value and significance of flesh," and spirit as the flower of it. In his woman we seem to see the transmutation in process.

Mr. Meredith accepts as simple fact what Rossetti was at one time so anathemised for expressing, he too knows "not her body from her soul," and he has been the first of the novelists to give her to art with all the bloom of her sweet physical holiness upon her—*mulier* as well as *femina*. With sentimentality about her he has, therefore, no patience whatever. Of distinctions between the sexes not founded on organism he takes no account.

"A girl that was so like a boy" was Sir Austin Feverel's "ideal of a girl." I should say it is Mr. Meredith's too. "The subsequent immense distinction" he considers "less one of sex than of education." The woman all feminine, the man all masculine are terrors to him. That likeness in difference of which the Laureate has sung is his ideal of the relations of man and woman too. "You meet now and then men," he writes in

The Tragic Comedians "who have the woman in them without being womanized; these are the pick of men. And the choicest women are those who yield not a feather of their womanliness for some amount of manlike strength . . . man's brain, woman's heart." Her conventional "purity," sentimental daintiness, are to him a dangerous superstition born of the selfish grossness of man. It is appetite not love that makes such demands. But "love: a word in many mouths not often explained," what is that but "a finer shoot of the tree stoutly planted in good gross earth; the senses pouring their live sap, and the minds companioned, and the spirits made one by the whole-natured conjunction." Mr. Meredith has nothing but scorn for that artificial line of demarcation between the sexes embodied in the ladies "retiring" from the dinner-table. If the gentlemen's after-dinner wine and wit are good things for the husband, there is no reason in nature why they should not be so for the wife also; and if not good for him, why, he should have the manliness to give them up altogether. One can hardly be wrong in reading Alvan's robust conception of wifehood in *The Tragic Comedians* as Mr. Meredith's own. It was not

only on the heights of mind and heart that he and his Clotilde were to meet, but whatsoever things of sense were wholesome for him, should she not share them too—wine and all.

"They marched to the table together, and sat together, and drank a noble Rhine wine together—true Rauenthal. His robustness of body and soul inspired the wish that his well-born wife might be, in her dainty fashion, yet honestly and without mincing, his possible boonfellow: he and she, glass in hand, thanking the bountiful heavens, blessing mankind in chorus. It belonged to his hearty dream of the wife he would choose, were she to be had."

This ideal of a "fair boonfellow of the rollicking faun" is surely better than the sneaking indulgence every man must feel his "after-dinner" hour to be.

To love the flower and be ashamed of the root is a pitiable silliness in Mr. Meredith's eyes. To stand entranced at Lucy's terrible youthful beauty, and to object to that plumping of her exquisite proportions on bread and butter (and "worse"!) without which that dazzling bloom of health could never have been upon her cheek; to ascend heaven on an aria and object to the tired prima donna recuperating on bottled stout, is incomprehensible illogicality. "True poets and true women have the native sense of the divineness of what the world deems gross material

substance," he writes in *Diana*, and it is because Mr. Meredith too feels that divineness with such a passionate faith and worship, knows it so to be "at the founts of the world," that the makebelieve poetry of sentimentalism seems such a laborious foolishness to him—as though men should become too fastidious for the "grossness" of natural sunlight, and choose to live by some glow-worm extract of cucumber. That woman should need stage-lights to make her wonderful seems the very strangest of errors. Why, she herself is a star!—a swaddled star (if the phrase be not too wild) swaddled in no end of sentimental muslins and exhibited by Chinese lantern. To tear these wrappages every one away, to put that stupid light out, and give her back to us again in all her old wonderful shining, that is what Mr. Meredith has set himself to do for her and us.

Woman is really a tradition with us to-day, a superstition, whose priests are the sentimentalists, latterday guardians of a revelation which long ago had life in it, but which they have so perverted that it is hard to see in its feeble survival any trace of the old chivalric ideal. Mr. Meredith comes with a new revelation of her old

divineness, for a long time now little more than a rumour kept in circulation by men for the sake of resultant gratification on lower planes. To quote his own words once more, he destroys the poetry of sentimental woman, "the ideal of a waxwork sex," to give us woman as she is, a starry reality "undreamed of by sentimental man." He brings to us a poet's assurance, deepest of all, of the truth of that old instinct of man that has given us Sybil and Norn. Woman is nearer to nature's heart than man, as the poet is nearer, she lives more with the great things that alone make life worth having than he, she values the Eternities, and has but little of his comical seriousness with regard to temporal things; and by that reliance on her instincts and intuitions of which man has from time immemorial made mock, she rises among his conventions an ever-springing fount of natural illumination. It is for this reason that she means so much to him, and for Mr. Meredith she means all. "They are our ordeal," said Sir Austin, warning Richard that "there are women in the world, my son;" and again in *The Egoist*—

"Women have us back to the conditions of primitive man, or they shoot us higher than the topmost star. But it is as we please. Let them tell us what we are to them: for us, they are

our back and front of life: the poet's Lesbia, the poet's Beatrice; ours is the choice. And were it proved that some of the bright things are in the pay of Darkness, with the stamp of his coin on their palms, and that some are the very angels we hear sung of, not the less might we say that they find us out, they have us by our leanings. They are to us what we hold of best or worst within. By their state is our civilization judged: and if it is hugely animal still, that is because primitive men abound and will have their pasture."

"Ours is the choice" because ours is that strength, of body and brain, of which, as Mr. Meredith is constantly insisting, woman is by nature so resistlessly a worshipper; hers is the light of the spirit, but where and how it shall burn is for man to say, it is in the power of his strength as a lamp in the hand. But, woe to him if he use it ill! "For women are not the end, but the means of life, and they punish us for so perverting their uses. They punish society." A man's relations to woman, how he regards her, how he acts towards her, are the most significant things about him. The whole tragi-comedy of *The Egoist* comes, as has been seen, of the testing of Sir Willoughby by woman; and the phrase Mr. Meredith uses to describe one woman in *Rhoda Fleming* would, doubtless, more or less, also represent to him the whole sex—"a crucible-woman," one "in contact with whom you were soon resolved to your component parts." Of

that perversion of her uses Mr. Meredith, as I have already hinted, has much to say, and there can be no doubt that woman has yet had no such ally in her battle against masculinity as he; all the more precious because he is able to look at both sides, and as well as taking part in the battle with all his various powers, is able to do good camp-service in arming her against herself. Most men who take up the cause of woman do so sentimentally, as her slave, Mr. Meredith rather fights as her captain, the only way, as I fancy he has somewhere said, for man to help her. He can laugh at her too, which sentimental man dare never, and to be able to laugh at a woman, is to have her in one's power. Over her various quixotries, and all her serious-faced patents for "emancipating" her sex, he is a merry as Adrian Harley on the solemn plotting of Richard and Ripton; and for the female faddist and philanthropist he has as little mercy as Thackeray. "Relapsed upon religion and little dogs" is his caustic characterisation of Mrs. Caroline Grandison, into whose "garden of girls" Sir Austin Feverel carried the Cinderella slipper on behalf of his model son, and into the secrets of whose patent female forcing-house we are allowed to

follow him, led by the good woman herself—that gymnasium fitted-up with "swing-poles, and stride-poles, and newly invented instruments for bringing out special virtues: an instrument for the lungs: an instrument for the liver; one for the arms and thighs; one for the wrists; the whole for the promotion of the christian accomplishments." "Woolly negroes blest her name, and whiskered John Thomases deplored her weight" is another phrase by which she is commended to our unforgetfulness. And what characterisation of a well-known type of woman could be better than this of Lucie, Baroness von Crefeldt, in *The Tragic Comedians*, who, we are told, "was one of those persons who after a probationary term in the character of woman, had become men."

One of Mr. Meredith's favourite pleasantries is to take woman at her word, give her the hearing of that "reason" of her possession of which she is so anxious to assure us; then with a face of mock-seriousness expose her delicious illogicalities, her valiant sophistries, and send her back to her feminine defences with the pout he has watched for—"you expect me to be all reason!"

"'Wise or not, he has the right to scheme his best to keep you' said Vernon Whitford, as Clara took him into her con-

spiracy against Sir Willoughby. She looked on Vernon with a shade of wondering reproach, 'Why? what right?'

'The right you admit when you ask him to release you.'"

To struggle for days in the net and then to exclaim "What net!" is not this woman? And, again, what could be more delicious than Adrian's *reductio* of Richard's indignant vindication of Lucy from the blame of his marriage.

"'She did all she could to persuade me to wait!' emphasized Richard. Adrian shook his head with a deplorable smile.

'Come, come, my good Ricky; not all! not all!' Richard bellowed: 'What more could she have done?'

'She could have shaved her head, for instance.'"

Wholesome laughter is perhaps woman's greatest need, it blows away the sentimental gossamer (I had almost written cobweb) and Mr. Meredith's is as generous as his own South-West. The rare cynical ring in it is kept for those negative types for whom few of us would cry mercy. Mr. Meredith is able too, I said, to look at both sides of the great conflict. While untiring in his denunciation of man's unworthy use of woman's divineness, he does not forget that "bad is two-sexed upon earth," and that man's is only half the apple. If he so passionately appreciates her special greatness, it is not to forget his; while he recognises that the weakness of either sex is but an overgrowth of its strength—woman

becoming the slave rather than the mistress of those senses through which her illumination comes, and man driven by rather than driving that brain which is the fount of his strength.

> "Get you something of our purity
> And we will of your strength: we ask no more,"

said the *Fair Ladies in Revolt*, in that charming and masterly ballad in which Mr. Meredith embodies a duel in dialogue between the sexes—with the result that the ladies won one of their two opponents who had from the first, indeed, remained suspiciously silent during his friend's attack. Strength, otherwise brain, "more brain, O Lord, more brain!" that—Mr. Meredith's universal specific—is woman's need, though one hesitates to chime in at once with "purity" for man, remembering a notable saying of Sir Austin Feverel's, as he complimented Lady Blanche on her woman's worship of strength—"strength in whatever form" is "the child of heaven; whereas purity is a characteristic and can be spotted—how soon!"—remembering that and the inevitable corollary which Lady Blanche at once detected, but which only one of Mr. Meredith's *dramatis personæ* could have so neatly formulated—"I see" she said archly "we are the lovelier vessels; you

claim the more direct descent. *Men are seedlings: women slips!*" Now, of course, Mr. Meredith does not mean that, and when he says that man's need is purity I cannot think that he uses the word merely as Sir Austin did, for that would be to name all that something "which places woman so high" a paltry gloss indeed, and reduce the feminine to a poor sum of degrees north or south of man, when does not the whole of nature witness it as one of the two equal poles on which the world spins round. I shall not venture to say exactly what Mr. Meredith *does* mean, but suggest the substitution of the word "Spirit" for "purity," as one has already written "brain" for "strength" and leave the masculine reader to think out his need for himself. Whether Mr. Meredith's specific is indeed the feminine panacea he asserts lovers of Diana may, perhaps, be pardoned for doubting, for she had brain, surely, and yet if her story means anything it would seem to testify against Mr. Meredith's theory; at every important crisis of her life her brain seemed at once to abdicate, and leave her at the mercy of her impulses. Once a woman always a woman. Besides is not brain "two sexed on earth" also? At least I found Mr. Meredith paying a

compliment to "the fine brain of woman" somewhere, I am certain—and . . . .* but I can fancy Mr. Meredith exclaiming with Alvan "Oh, she's a riddle, of course. I don't pretend to spell every letter of her." And yet how many has he spelt! it would seem indeed that he has "sprouted" those "petticoats" which Tracy Runningbrook sighed the lack of "for the answering of purely feminine questions;" or as if in some mystic manner he had become initiated mason-wise into their sex. For, all their *nuances*, all their "feminine silk-flashes of meaning," seem familiar to him, every little trick of their nerves, every whim of their blood, every warm sweet secresy of it too. Yet with what an exquisitely tender reverence does he touch them, like some gentle physician with his stethescope at the bosom of a blushing girl. What a bloom is there on every dear revelation! That picture of Sandra "glad to extinguish the candle and be covered up dark in the circle of her warmth;" or the observation of "the mellowed depth, the soft human warmth, which marriage had lent to her voice" in after years in Italy. If any man has written of motherhood as Mr.

*The reader of Mr. Meredith is supposed to be 'up' in "the Dot and Dash" Language!

Meredith has written I have yet to meet with his work. I suppose there are poor folk in the world capable of misunderstanding those delicate pages in *Richard Feverel* which tell how Lucy's

> "Innocent maidenhood awoke
> To married innocence"

under the delicious care of good "Bessie Berry" —but, like *Modern Love* and everything great or beautiful in the world, such writing

> "is not meat
> For little people or for fools,"

and, happily, the world is not quite made up of such. Mr. Meredith is safe with the rest.

I do not propose here to consider one by one those individual women "whose names are five sweet symphonies." Apart from the question of space, I cannot think whom it would benefit. To imagine that I could in a page or two give them to the reader who has yet to know them would be a poor compliment to their perfection, and what reader who knows them already would not be filled with furious impatience at the presumptious surplusage? Moreover, I have nothing of the nature of British "criticism" to offer upon them, and passages of exclamatory admiration, unless one can do them as well as Mr. Swinburne, are little profitable.

Diana Warwick, Sandra Belloni, Clara Middleton, Rhoda Fleming, Cecilia Halkett—"Shakespeare's women" all: and let no man miss Alvan's Clotilde, imperishable type of that feminine cowardice to which, Mr. Meredith says, all young women are trained; or that wonderful study of woman in her great natural rôle of charlatan, the Countess de Saldar. And these, of course, are not all, nor are the rest forgotten though unnamed. Could one forget a Renée thus described?

"... a brunette of the fine lineaments of the good blood of France. She chattered snatches of Venetian caught from the gondoliers, she was like a delicate cup of crystal brimming with the beauty of the place, and making one ... drink in all his impressions through her. Her features had the soft irregularities which run to rarities of beauty, as the ripple rocks the light; mouth, eyes, brows, nostrils, and bloomy cheeks played into one another liquidly; thought flew, tongue followed, and the flash of meaning quivered over them like night-lightning. Or oftener, to speak truth, tongue flew, thought followed: her age was but newly seventeen, and she was French."

This is as good as the famous "dainty rogue in porcelain" or "the look of the nymph that had gazed too long on the faun, and had unwittingly copied his lurking lip and long sliding eye;" phrases belonging to that Clara whom Mr. Meredith seems to have determined to make blessed above women, if description could do it;

though, in truth, there is no woman he has ever written about who does not live in our memory by some such vivid phrase or sensitive characterisation. His style certainly attains its finest flower in her service; that delicate power of distinguishing "the half-tones humming round the note of a strung wire, which is a blunt single note to the common ear," and that touch so light to render every impression with its virgin bloom. As I have given the exoteric reader but little opportunity of judging for himself, I shall not apologise to any who may know the passage by heart for quoting here probably the most beautiful of all Mr. Meredith's descriptions of woman, that of Clara walking in a breeze.

" . . she wore a dress cunning to embrace the shape and flutter loose about it, in the spirit of a summer's day. Calypso-clad, Dr. Middleton would have called her. See the silver birch in a breeze: here it swells, there it scatters, and it is puffed to a round and it streams like a pennon, and now gives the glimpse and shine of the white stem's line within, now hurries over it, denying that it was visible, with a chatter along the sweeping folds, while still the white peeps through. She had the wonderful art of dressing to suit the season and the sky. To-day the art was ravishingly companionable with her sweet-lighted face; too sweet, too vividly-meaningful for pretty, if not of the strict severity for beautiful. Millinery would tell us that she wore a fichu of thin white muslin crossed in front on a dress of the same light stuff, trimmed with deep rose. She carried a grey-silk parasol, traced at the borders with green creepers, and across the arm devoted to Crossjay, a length of trailing ivy, and in that

hand a bunch of the first long grasses. These hues of red rose and green and pale green, ruffled and pouted in the billowy white of the dress ballooning and valleying softly, like a yacht before the sail bends low; but she walked not like one blown against; resembling rather the day of the South-West driving the clouds, gallantly firm in commotion; interfusing colour and varying in her features from laugh to smile and look of settled pleasure, like the heavens above the breeze."

Such a picture as this, such poetry with such particularisation, seems to me not only a triumph for Mr. Meredith, but for the literary art itself. And this coral-island perfection is all the more striking in a writer who is such a master of a method so diverse as his own lightning-suggestive.

Small painters should never read Mr. Meredith if they would work again.

VI.—"MODERN LOVE" AND NATURE POETRY.

A CULT within a cult is an interesting literary development, and such, if it be not already established, it will be quite safe to predict before long in the case of Mr. Meredith. For, now that his novels are threatened with popularity, it will be strange if that "acute and honourable minority" which has so long rejoiced in secret "to be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fantastic delivery of the verities" does not intrench itself behind his verse. It pays the penalty of that insane desire to "go shares" in a new thing which is so common that it should conclusively demonstrate the altruism of humanity and of which, of course, the present volume is a paradoxical example; it has called in the man from the highways to the feast only to find that really, after all, it is

impossible for them to eat together. It is beginning to feel what Mr. John Addington Symonds, for example, will to a certainty one day experience, if he is not already repenting his generous impulse to "share" his secluded Davos.

The recent outcry concerning Mr. Meredith's novels has already attracted the excursionists of literature, there are fatal signs of them in the beloved land. It is already considered necessary to read those arcana without understanding, or to lie about them; and that old minority will be fortunate if it still keeps its faith before the spectacle of ungainly and foolish conversion.

But in the case of Mr. Meredith's verse his disciples may, I think, rest secure of intrusion; for it is long since it was deemed necessary to read good poetry, and all who love it in sincerity and truth will hope it may be still longer before it is deemed so again. Thanks to that, poetry at the present time is the one art comparatively free from vulgarisation, our one

> "Shadowy isle of bliss
> Midmost the beating of the steely sea."

Thus, happier than the man who discovers a new novelist, the critic of poetry may reveal his latest find without danger of invasion from

Philistia ; only those who are really his fellows will have ears to hear, he will win that sympathy which is so passionate a need, and none the less escape the garlic-eating "brother."

Most of us have, I suspect, come to Mr. Meredith's verse by way of his prose, which in the case of almost any other writer would mean with a presumption against it, except, of course in so far as it might be modified by gratitude for past delight or that curiosity which always attaches to an artist's essays in a new medium.

Many prose-writers, the majority in fact, have first written verse ; yet as it has been to them (what, indeed, it is becoming the fashion to regard it all round) but as the grindstone on which to sharpen the fine tools of prose, their verse has more interest than value. It is but the leaf not the flower of their genius. Mr. Meredith's prose, however, is generally so akin in its imaginative method to verse, that one comes with confidence to his rhymed poetry, expecting at least the same qualities of power as have already won us. Nor are we disappointed. For, although Mr. Meredith has undoubtedly sharpened the tools of prose upon his verse, it has been as one knife is sharpened on another knife, and

certainly the flower of his genius is double.

That 1851 volume of "Poems" on which the bookish virtuoso sets such price, is really worth more to art than one would expect from a knowledge of its foster-parent—for, pleasant and certainly happiest of fellows as the "bookman" is how rarely does he rescue us a diamond from his dustheap! Oddity and sentiment are dear to him, but he has weak eyes for greatness—saving exceptions, of course, among which count these "Poems, by George Meredith, John W. Parker and Sons, 1851." And these became dear, we may be sure, through no recognition of a new eye upon nature in *The South-west Wind in the Woodland* and the *Pastorals*, or of the delicious freshness of note and chasteness of touch of *Love in the Valley*, but through a canny forecast of "the Meredith market" that was to be. And indeed a casual glance therein might easily have missed the significance of the book, for the greater part of it is made up of the graceful sentimentalities and insipid "antiques" of the "keep-sake" school, though here and there is a line or a lyric decidedly beyond them. But had it once fallen upon a page of that *South-West Wind* there should have been no mistake. Rare

twins, the eye of a naturalist and the voice of a poet, were unmistakeably present.

> "The great south-west drives o'er the earth,
> And loosens all his roaring robes
> Behind him, over heath and moor."

for none but a poet with an imagination as masculine as his voice, and who else gives us lines of description such as these?

> "Now, whirring like an eagle's wing
> Preparing for a wide blue flight,—
> Now flapping like a sail that tacks
> And chides the wet bewildered mast,
> Now, screaming like an anguished thing
> Chased close by some down-breathing beak,
> Now, wailing like a breaking heart,
> That will not wholly break, but hopes
> With hope that knows itself in vain;
> Now, threatening like a storm-charged cloud,
> Now, cooing like a woodland dove,
> Now, up again in roar and wrath
> High soaring and wide sweeping, now
> With sudden fury dashing down
> Full-force on the awaiting woods."

What poet even unless he have added the naturalist's sensitive instinct, which hears without listening, sees without watching, and remembers without a book. The south-west wind is a passion with Mr. Meredith. It often blows in his novels, and there is another fine poem to it in *A Reading of Earth*. "Love in the Valley"

is the one poem Mr. Meredith has deemed worthy of reprinting. It reappears, with much new beauty, in the *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth.* But there is one at least of the "Pastorals" which should surely have been reprinted too, and from which, as the volume is so rarely to be seen, I shall venture to make a somewhat lengthy quotation.

"Summer glows warm on the meadows; then come, let us roam thro' them gaily,
Heedless of heat, and the hot-kissing sun, and the fear of dark freckles;
For never one kiss will he give on a neck, or a lily-white forehead,
Chin, hand, or fair bosom uncover'd, all panting, to take the chance coolness,—
But surely the hot fiery pressure shall leave its brown seal of espousal.
Still heed him not; come, tho' he kiss till the soft little upper-lip loses
Half its pure whiteness; just speckl'd where the curve of the rosy mouth reddens.

Come, let him kiss, let him kiss, and his kiss shall make thee the sweeter,
Thou art no nun veil'd and vow'd; doom'd to nourish a withering pallor!
City exotics beside thee would show like bleach'd linen at mid-day,
Hung upon hedges of eglantine! Thou in the freedom of nature,
Full of her beauty and wisdom, gentleness, joyance, and kindliness!

Come, and like bees will we gather the rich golden honey of noontide;
Deep in the sweet summer meadows, border'd by hillside and river;
Lined with long trenches half-hidden, where, sweetest, the smell of white meadow-sweet
Blissfully hovers—O sweetest! but pluck it not! even in the tenderest
Grasp it will lose breath and wither; like many, not made for a posy.

See the sun slopes down the meadows, where all the flowers are falling!
Falling unhymn'd; for the nightingale scarce ever charms the long twilight:
Mute with the cares of the nest; only known by a 'chuck, chuck,' and dovelike
Low call of content, but the finch and the linnet and blackcap pipe loudly.
From elms round the western hill-side warbles the rich-bill'd ouzel;
And the shrill throstle is filling the dusky thickening copses;
Singing o'er hyacinths hid, and most honey'd of flowers, white field-rose.

O joy thus to revel all day in the grass of our own beloved country;
Revel all day, till the lark mounts at eve with his sweet 'tirra-lirra';
Thrilling delightfully. See, on the river the slow rippled surface
Shining; the slow ripple broadens in circles; the bright surface smoothens;
Now it is flat as the leaves of the yet unseen water-lily.
There dart the lives of a day, ever-varying tactics fantastic,
There by the wet-mirror'd osiers, the emerald wing of the kingfisher

Flashes, the fish in his beak! There the dab-chick dived, and the motion
Lazily undulates all thro' the tall standing army of rushes.

O joy thus to revel all day, till the twilight turns us homeward!
Till all the lingering deep-blooming splendour of sunset is over,
And the one star shines mildly in mellowing hues, like a spirit
Sent to assure us that light never dieth, tho' day is now buried.
Saying; to-morrow, to-morrow, few hours intervening, that interval
Tuned by the woodlark in heaven, to-morrow my semblance, far eastward,
Heralds the day 'tis my mission eternal, to seal and to prophecy.

Come then and homeward; passing down the close path of the meadows.
Home like the bees stored with sweetness; each with a lark in the bosom,
Trilling for ever, and oh! will yon lark ever cease to sing up there?"

was the summer sumptuousness of the real English fields and not those of some dream-island "far from all men's knowing" ever so expressed for us, and all the delicious sensuous absorption that in such a ramble lengthens a July day into a summer and drowns as in wine the memory of the town. What minute pictures too!

"There, by the wet mirror'd osiers, the emerald wing of the kingfisher
Flashes, the fish in his beak! there the dab-chick dived and the motion
Lazily undulates all thro' the tall standing army of rushes,"

or that pathetic vignette of the nightingale "mute with the cares of the nest" (like how many another poor poet); while the whole poem is suffused with that divine suggestiveness, without which a picture of nature is mere earth and timber. Mr. Meredith's studies of her in her sibylline moods, and the fine manly philosophy he has learnt from her, were yet to come.

At this point it will be well to abandon the chronological method, as too unwieldy for the scope of such a paper as this, and in which there is always a danger of not being able to see the wood for the trees; and try to gain a broad view of Mr. Meredith's verse as it at present lies garnered in his four more representative volumes. The one question with which such an enquiry is concerned is—what does this poet bring us that we can find nowhere else? To which I would make answer—a new poetry of nature, and *Modern Love.*

Let us first consider the latter. In the same volume are some *genre* pictures of country life, the power and charm of which could not well be overstated, the quaintness, the colour, the dramatic vividness of phrase—

> "Easy to think that grieving's folly
> *When the hand's firm as driven stakes,*"

says "Juggling Jerry" in a poem which has won nearest to popularity of any of the verses of a poet who has never known what it is to be "lapped in the elysium of a new edition."

Ask most people about Mr. Meredith's poetry and it is strange if they do not quote "Juggling Jerry" or some other of these "Poems of the English Roadside." But, surely, fine as they are, not in them resides the incommunicable, and to know them and miss the poem which gives the title to the volume were almost as unpardonable as to know the Laureate by his "Northern Farmer." Again, "Margaret's Bridal Eve" is a beautiful poem, well deserving the praise it has won, and the *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life* are full of fine things, such as that livid picture of Attila's death chamber, with the frenzied wife who has murdered him,

> "Huddled in the corner dark,
> Humped and grinning like a cat;"

but they are for the most part, nevertheless, studies in the conventional subjects of tragedy, and in the manner—more or less Meredithised certainly—of other poets. They are quite remarkable enough to give Mr. Meredith a place above the crowd of modern singers, but not that

higher seat which, in my judgment, is his, in right of the *Songs and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth and Modern Love.*

Modern Love is Mr. Meredith's one great poem of tragic life. It is, moreover, Mr. Meredith's one great achievement in poetic art.

All the other qualities of poetry are to be found on any page of his volumes, but, with the exception of this and one or two other shorter pieces, such as "The Meeting," the quality of art, the architectural faculty, is lacking, "Every section of this great progressional poem," said Mr. Swinburne, in a noble vindicatory letter against the criticism of the *Spectator*, "being connected with the other by links of the finest and most studied workmanship." And as art is, of course, the one antidote against the "opium of time," this is likely, despite the notable nature poems yet to be considered, to be the one poem which will carry to it the name of George Meredith as a writer of verse.

It is a story of the unhappy wedlock of two who were, the poet tells us,

> "Rapid falcons in a snare
> Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
> Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
> They wander'd once,"

but now!—let the wonderful picture of the opening sonnet express their present unhappiness.

"By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flow'd away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all."

So, day by day, "each suck'd a secret and each wore a mask," she wooed by another, and he with hidden knowledge of her sin.

But, no common natures are these two, no vulgar misalliance is theirs, else were there no story; rather are they two instruments each fine, each capable of discoursing excellent music by itself or with its natural complement, yet never intended to be played together, which, however, fate has insisted on wedding in a duet. "It is no vulgar nature I have wived," says the husband, and again

"The misery is greater, as I live!
To know her flesh so pure, so keen her sense,
That she does penance now for no offence,
Save against love."

Therefore the story is one of Mr. George Meredith's own dramas of fine shades and sublimated sensitiveness which have their action in the mind and heart, rather than in the daylight world of labelled "act and deed," with sufferings need one say, none the less piercing, and crises none the less portentous for that.

"Beneath the surface this, while by the fire
They sat, she laughing at a quiet joke."

Only a very careful study of the poem, line by line, can, of course, reveal the fulness of its masterly subtlety—but even that inconsiderate person who expects to run and read at the same time could hardly miss gaining deep hints thereof. Of such fine fibre is the husband that we find him so reverent of his wife and of the claims of her true heart's love over his mere husband's "rights by law established" as to be able to say—

"It cannot be such harm on her cool brow
To put a kiss? Yet, if I meet him there!
But she is mine! Ah, no! I know too well
I claim a star whose light is overcast:
I claim a phantom-woman in the past.
The hour has struck, though I heard not the bell!"

For distraction he appeals to pleasure and to philosophy alike in vain, gnawed at by suspicion and sick with yearning for those "splendours, mysteries, dearer because known," which "her shoulder in the glass," albeit so familiar, inspires.

> "Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt
> Of righteous feeling made her pitiful;"

and at times it seemed they might be on the very threshold of the old Saturnian reign once more, if either could take one step nearer which Pride, however, always interfered to prevent.

The cause of their estrangement suggests a bitter reflection on woman.

> "In love's deep woods
> I dreamt of loyal life:—the offence is there!"

A woman's jealousy will not even brook the rivalry of a dream.

> "My crime is that, the puppet of a dream,
> I plotted to be worthy of the world.
> Oh, had I with my darling helped to mince
> The facts of life, you still had seen me go
> With hindward feather and with forward toe,
> Her much-adored delightful Fairy Prince!"

And the hardest pain to bear is not the loss of the future of "dim rich skies" so dear to all men, but that of the past now proved illusion. If that

> "Were firm, or might be blotted: but the whole
> Of life is mixed: the mocking past must stay:
> And if I drink oblivion of a day,
> So shorten I the stature of my soul."

Yet how different is Nature's acceptance of the "over and gone!"

"'I play for seasons; not eternities!'
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust!'
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies
She is full sure! upon her dying rose
She drops a look of fondness and goes by,
Scarce any retrospection in her eye;
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag: there, an urn.
Pledged she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end
This lesson of our only visible friend,
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?
Yes! yes!—but oh, our human rose is fair
Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
When the renew'd forever of a kiss
Sounds thro' the listless hurricane of hair!"

Then a fourth is added to the drama by the husband's looking for comfort, though "with little prospect of a cure" on a woman to whom through the rest of the poem he refers as his "Lady" as distinguished from his wife—with the consequence that the latter has another "veering fit," and illustrates what her husband was afterwards to experience,

"How many a thing which we cast to the ground,
When others pick it up becomes a gem."

Can it be true that "women still may love whom they deceive," since she is jealous! Then

comes this sonnet, so delicately pictorial, so vividly dramatic, and, like them all, so masculine in phrase.

"I think she sleeps: it must be sleep, when low
Hangs that abandon'd arm towards the floor:
The hand turn'd with it. Now make fast the door.
Sleep on: it is your husband, not your foe!
The Poet's black stage-lion of wrong'd love,
Frights not our modern dames:—well, if he did!
Now will I pour new light upon that lid,
Full-sloping like the breasts beneath. 'Sweet dove,
'Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon: I disturb.
'I do not? well!' Her waking infant stare
Grows woman to the burden my hands bear.
Her own handwriting to me when no curb
Was left on Passion's tongue. She trembles thro';
A woman's tremble—the whole instrument;—
I show another letter lately sent,
The words are very like: the name is new."

Ah me! for the old nights when by the "clicking coal" they used to sit, and he talk sentimentality about the *cecidit flos* of Love,—yet never thought it then. To the world, however, they are the happiest of couples. "They see no ghost." "Hiding the skeleton" is the game and it is so well played, they "waken envy of their happy lot." "Fast, sweet, and golden, shows our marriage-knot." O! to be like Jack and Tom and Moll and Meg on that country green! They are happy enough, God keep them so—yet what

is their happiness?—O cynic!—"'tis true that when we trace its source, 'tis beer." The finding of "a wanton-scented tress" reminds him of an old amour,—for he was never

> "Of those miserable males
> Who sniff at vice, and daring not to snap
> Do therefore hope for Heaven"—

and the discovery makes him ask himself

> "If for that time I must ask charity,
> Have I not any charity to give."

The bitterest cup of unconscious mockery is held to their lips one evening by a young friend about to be married, who, full of talk of his "most wondrous she," demands their blessing, "convinced that words of wedded lovers must bring good."

> "We question: if we dare! or if we should!
> And pat him, with light laugh. We have not winced.
> Next, she has fallen. Fainting points the sign
> To happy things in wedlock. When she wakes
> She looks the star that through the cedar shakes;
> Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine."

Then it is evident she is struggling to speak out her secret to him—she has nervous fits and falls into tears even when he is by, but

> "She will not speak. I will not ask. We are
> League-sundered by the silent gulf between."

"'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house
Receives us: rooms are full: we can but get
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret
At that, it is half said. The great carouse
Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door.
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.
Why did I come here in that dullard fit?
I enter, and lie couch'd upon the floor.
Passing, I caught the coverlid's quick beat:—
Come, Shame, burn to my soul! and Pride, and Pain—
Foul demons that have tortured me, sustain!
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.
I know not how, but, shuddering as I slept,
I dream'd a banished Angel to me crept,
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night."

Yet, why will she not speak?

"Oh! I do but wait a sign!
Pluck out the eyes of Pride! thy mouth to mine!
Never! though I die thirsting. Go thy ways!"

He is worried and unstrung. "Distraction is the panacea," says the doctor—so let it be, anything the devil may offer, for "he seemed kind when not a soul would comfort."—Ah! my Lady!

"I am content
To play with you the game of sentiment,
And with you enter on paths perilous,"

but if he indeed does give himself to her, his slighted egoism speaks, she must be utterly his.

"I feel the promptings of satanic power,
While you do homage unto me alone."

Yet, how is it that this new love has little of the wonder and brings none of the peace of the old?

"Am I failing? for no longer can I cast
A glory round about this head of gold.
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould:
Not like the consecration of the Past!
Is my soul beggar'd? Something more than earth
I cry for still: I cannot be at peace
In having love upon a mortal lease.
I cannot take the woman at her worth!
Where is the ancient wealth wherewith I clothed
Our human nakedness, and could endow
With spiritual splendour a white brow
That else had grinn'd at me the fact I loath'd!
A kiss is but a kiss now! and no wave
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.
But, as you will! we'll sit contentedly,
And eat our pot of honey on the grave."

Only one man before Mr. Meredith has written lines of such pathos as the sixth and seventh here, or of such shuddering grimness as the last two—what a picture of "middle-aged sensuality" is there! It is as fearful as Holbein. Yet there is a line in the next sonnet even more fearful. In that chill mood of disillusion which he has now reached, sitting with the kisses of his mistress dust and ashes on his lips, he philosophises on the evolution of Love.

"First, animals; and, next
Intelligences at a leap; on whom
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,
And all that draweth on the tomb for text."

With brain has come the sense of death, for the first time it is a factor in our schemes, schemes shrunken by its admission from eternity to an hour. But "into this state comes Love," and in the intense wonderful life he brings, death is forgotten, nay! is "impossible,"—the light is so strong, darkness must be a myth.

"The shadow loses form:
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.
Intelligence and instinct now are one."

But love takes flight and then we see how that extravagant faith was but a "rose in the blood," a flattery of passion—"And we stand waken'd, shivering from our dream." Happy then is he who can learn from nature,—she, who, in a earlier sonnet we were told, plays "for seasons not eternities"—to "live but with the day" and plod and plod untroubled by to-morrow. *Lady*, then sneers the sonneteer, this is the best I can say for love, this philosophy of the charnel, we are too wearily wise for sentimental lollipops, it is no use craving a sonnet to your shoe-tie, we are long past that, at least I am, and this grim stuff

is my modern apology for gallantry, "*this, Lady, is my sonnet to your eyes.*" This is a downright wicked line. It was so Mephistopheles laughed beneath Marguerite's window. Only the lost so cruelly sneer.

Then a more peaceful mood awhile prevails, he looks at his mistress with less jaundiced eyes; if the heart cannot endow her with that "ancient wealth of spiritual splendour" there is much in her to stimulate the mind.

> "This golden head has wit in it. I live
> Again, and a far higher life, near her."

Moreover, she has "that rare gift of beauty, common sense."

And she is very beautiful too. That bloom he was just despairing of is indeed on her face and she has that ardour of nature which can walk with him from fire to fire and slake that passionate thirst, with which so long he has been "languishing in drouth," though with all she cannot win him complete oblivion of that sorrow through which he sought her.

> "One restless corner of my heart, or head,
> That holds a dying something never dead,
> Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.
> It means, that woman is not, I opine,
> Her sex's antidote. Who seeks the asp
> For serpents' bites? 'Twould calm me could I clasp
> Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine!"

The next sonnet reveals that this last act has been played with a continental health resort for its stage, whereon now enters "Madam."

Husband and wife exchange the usual courtesy enquiries and off-hand answers, through which, however, on the part of the wife, come cries from the smothered suffering underneath. Of these he coldly affects to take no heed, but still he cannot but be moved by the refined sensitiveness of his wife's nature, which makes no vulgar show of pain and allows itself no vulgar solace—though, surely, there is danger in such pent feeling, for herself, if not for him.

> "She is not one
> Long to endure this torpidly, and shun
> The drugs that crowd about a woman's hand."

At last comes a meeting between his wife and his mistress, and the *nuances* of womanly finesse in their attitude to each other fill him with cynical wonderment. From the next sonnet but one we gather that his mistress has been feeling pity for his wife and urging him to cleave to her and let their *liaison* come to an end. But no! he says, to cleave to her would be sacrilege—vileness. It is either you or that.

> "Give to imagination some pure light
> In human form to fix it, or you shame

The devils with that hideous human game:—
Imagination urging appetite! . . . . . .
Imagination is the charioteer
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.
So, therefore, my dear lady, let me love!"

To this—

"She yields: my lady in her noblest mood has yielded;"

and there comes a golden hour of "music and moonlight," wherein the cup of his dreams seems to run over, and his "bride of every sense" seems found at last. But on his way homeward, lo! his wife and *her* lover! and at once his heart, that just now had been so full of music, is writhing with a jealousy that would have seemed impossible yesterday.

"Can I love one
And yet be jealous of another?"

O! what shall he do? Can he achieve peace "by turning to the fountain-source of woe," and seeking the old love at the old shrine—"I did love thee once!"—but there is no guidance anywhere, and

"The dread that my old love may be alive
Has seiz'd my nursling new love by the throat."

Next we read—

"We two have taken up a lifeless vow
To rob a living passion: dust for fire!"

and that vileness he so feared has come upon them,

"If I the death of love had deeply plann'd,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unbless'd kisses which upbraid
The full-waked sense; or, failing that, degrade!"

Yes, love is surely dead in him, for pity has come to take its place—a certain sign. She knows it, too; it makes her rave with pain, and so the days go by. One day they are in the fields—in "the season of the sweet wild-rose"—"my lady's emblem in the heart of me." He plucks one and dreams over it. Madam comes along and demands it of him. He drops it, and as they walk on, he feels her stop and "crush it under heel with trembling limbs."

"These," mocks the sad heart, "These are the summer days, and these our walks." At last an accident breaks the unnatural silence between them. He finds her one morning in a wood with her lover.

"I moved
Towards her, and made proffer of my arm.
She took it simply, with no rude alarm;
And that disturbing shadow pass'd reproved.
I felt the pain'd speech coming, and declared
My firm belief in her, ere she could speak.
A ghastly morning came into her cheek,
While with a widening soul on me she stared."

The next great sonnet, in spite of the multitude of foregoing quotations, must be quoted

entire—the sonnet of which Mr. Swinburne has said that "a more perfect piece of writing no man alive has ever turned out." Witness lines 5 to 8 :—

"We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard their noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye.
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband, and my bride.
Love that had robb'd us so, thus bless'd our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year wax'd very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the west, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love that had robb'd us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
And still I see across the twilight wave,
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings."

Then at last, they "drank the pure daylight of honest speech," but, alas! for the nature of woman, in which sense and senses are so intermixed, and for which there is no help but "more brain, O Lord, more brain," she conceives the ideal devotion of parting from him, so that he may go and be happy with his heart's lady. So, without a word, she was gone. "He found her by the ocean's moaning verge," his old love seemed in his face, she took his hand and went

back with him, and somehow "seem'd the wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry." But that night—

> "Her call
> Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
> 'Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!' she said.
> Lethe had pass'd those lips, and he knew all."

> "Thus piteously love closed what he begat:
> The union of this ever-diverse pair!
> These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
> Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
> Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
> They wander'd once; clear as the dew on flowers:
> But they fed not on the advancing hours:
> Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
> Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
> Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
> Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
> When hot for certainties in this our life!
> In tragic hints here see what evermore
> Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
> Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
> To know that faint thin line upon the shore!"

Anyone who loves these fifty poems—fifty poems, and yet one poem—must often have wondered why, among all the glib chatter which the last year or two has given us about the sonnet, with the one sure result of its vulgarisation, he has heard so little of *Modern Love*. How is it that with all the solemn discussion, as with bowed heads and bated breath, of "the great sonnet-

sequences," *Modern Love* has found no place among them? "Why, because," exclaims some young Miss of ten, who practises sonnet-writing in the nursery, as a kind of *bouts rimes*, "don't you know Mr. Meredith's *Modern Love* is not written in sonnets? A sonnet cannot have more than 14 lines, and there are, let me see how many kinds, Petrarcan, Shakesperean and—and—," so on. One can hardly be supposed to be in need of such information at this hour, and certainly one may be excused for thinking that Mr. Swinburne knows something about metrical law. And yet he employs the term sonnet to the poem I have just quoted. The young Miss may not remember that there was a moment in the history of the sonnet when sonnetters hung indecisive between a form in sixteen and that in fourteen lines. Of course, the choice finally fell upon the fourteen-lined form, wisely, all will agree, but do not the sixteen line poems in *Modern Love* so completely fulfil all the essential conditions of the sonnet as now traditionally formulated, that we may well extend to them the benefit of that "historic doubt," and accept them as that exception which proves the rule? Certainly they achieve that microcosmic completeness which is the aim,

of course, of every poem, but which one looks for more especially in the sonnet. That they are in the main dramatic—whereas the sonnet has generally been employed as a lyric form—matters not. "The moment eternal," however presented, is not that the one theme of the sonnet?

An isolated dramatic act—in the mind or in the daylight—a crisis, a tableau, come equally within its scope, and *Modern Love* is made up of such tableaux in sonnets, each of which, so victorious is the art, is a complete poem capable of sustaining a separate artistic existence, and yet again, by virtue of "links of the finest and most studied workmanship," part of a still greater whole.

There is a small and a great way of writing sonnets; there is the modern way of "the little masters," and there is that of the great poets. The parallels between Art and Religion are eternally suggestive. Just now they are each suffering from a very similar trouble—the decay of form. Each is doing its best to make-believe by the aid of strange gums and spices of embalmment; yet how vainly! It is but the delicate husk, the fair shell painted and fretted by a life that has for ever left it, and which is

already stretching hands to the light in the infancy of new forms. Form in Art has become a pedantry with us once more; we talk of it as a fixed quantity, and so for most of us it is a dead thing.

The recent pother about the sonnet to which I have alluded is an example of this. Rossetti really said the one vital thing about it—"A Shakesperean sonnet is better than the most perfect in form because Shakespeare wrote it."

"Fundamental brainwork," that other phrase of his, is everything. Strange is it to reflect that the very men whose sonnets we alone care about, have written their best in irregular forms; Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth, Rossetti, and Mrs. Browning. Wordsworth sings the praise of the sonnet in one of most mongrel form. Seeing that laws are certainly not made for the artist, one cannot help wondering for whose benefit they are so elaborately written down! "It takes a soul to make a body," Mrs. Browning said—so does it take a spirit to make a form. If a man has nothing to say, let him be silent. Why should he so invariably choose the sonnet in which to say it?

After all, is it not true that if a sonnet is a

poem, we don't care about its being a sonnet, and if it is not a poem, we don't care about it at all, be it never so well-bred a Petrarcan?

And now to return again, after too long a digression, to *Modern Love*. It is usual to class together Shakespeare's Sonnets, Rossetti's *House of Life*, and Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, as the three great sonnet-sequences. This appears to me really more or less arbitrary in regard to Shakespeare, for the general kinship of form is little in relation to the radical diversity in inspiration. Rossetti's sonnets are chiefly the product of highly-wrought fancy—he seems to have kept his imagination, in the main, of course, for his other poems—and if Shakespeare's sonnets have one quality more than another, it is that space and might of imagination for which we have no other name than the master's own. Mrs. Browning's are really much more truly related to Shakespeare's, for they are spontaneously lyrical in their inspiration, and imaginative in their expression; yet they are so related but as the hawk is related to the eagle. Such comparisons are indeed of little or no value; I have deprecated the making of them elsewhere; yet, as they have been instituted, I shall venture for once to

break my own precept and suggest that *Modern Love* is the one poem of closest kin to Shakespeare's sonnets. The kinship is hardly in the form, which is, without exception, composed of four Petrarcan quatrains, each independent in respect of rhymes; nor is it merely in the "Shakesperean ring" of the verse. That is a trick soon learnt, and may mean something or nothing. It is simply in "the fundamental brain-work," which one feels alive through every line and word of the poem, the spaciousness and strength of the imagination revealed to us by that greatness of metaphor, and that compression of phrase, which marks all great literary art, and of which I have before spoken in considering Mr. Meredith's prose. Though I can only hope by my synopsis to have given a faint idea of the poem as a whole, yet of this quality of imaginative phrase my numerous quotations furnish abundant examples. The last quatrain of the poem alone, if nought else were left, should witness a master. Whether or not the kinship to Shakespeare's sonnets seems a real one to others, or whether it is but an eccentricity of my own judgment, is of little moment; it is only important that *Modern Love* should be recognised as a great poem of "tragic life."

One would need no knowledge of his 1851 poems to expect much from Mr. Meredith's later volumes of nature-poetry, to which it is full time to turn. The wonderful natural descriptions scattered broadcast over his novels are sufficient earnest of a power in the quality of which he is especially alone. For, his nature-poetry is indeed quite different from any other before known in English literature. And the difference lies in the fact that, while most other poets have sung of Nature in the abstract, have moralised, sentimentalised, transcendentalised her, Mr. Meredith has cared more to sing her as she is in the concrete. His predecessors have, in the main, sung the spirit of nature; he sings her body, which is the earth, as well—"this Earth of the beautiful breasts."

Nature with a big "N," and nature with a little "n," express, I think, the two attitudes. It would seem to be an assumption from of old that a man may hope to interpret the one, though knowing little, and knowing that little wrongly, of the other.

It is, indeed, one of the liberties included in that "poetic license" which no poet ever thinks of taking out. And, of course, it is true that Art

(to quote the beautiful words of Mr. Oscar Wilde), "has flowers that no botanist knows of, birds that no museum possesses," that "she can bid the almond tree blossom in winter, and send the snow upon the ripe cornfield," yet, somehow, one has a feeling that the art which is best for us, and what we call the greatest, stands not in need of these miracles; her birds sing every morning in every glittering wood, her almond tree "bringeth forth his fruit in his season." At least it is so with Mr. Meredith's. He sings of nature, not because he worships her in some vague way afar off, as one might the abstract Woman, but because he has loved and worshipped her as a man his wife, lying in her arms, eye to eye, breath to breath. He has lived with her day by day for many years, he knows all her moods, moods of summer and winter, of joy and travail, strange moods of contradiction hard to bear, and yet alike in one as in another he has never lost his faith that her heart is love—"love, the great volcano."

In his knowledge of all the "secret things" of the woods and fields, all that too many of us but know by a rustle in the hedge as we come by, by a whirring or a scratching that stops with

a strange precision ere we can approach within a yard of it (as though it were an elfin loom or a secret still), and remains dumb with unshaken determination while we stand and listen in vain, with a queer sense of a life looking up at us and holding its breath somewhere near, though all unseen; in his knowledge of nature's "fairie," her troll-folk and her *diablerie*, Mr. Meredith can be compared with none save his own Melampus.

"With love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;
The good physician, Melampus, loving them all,
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book."

One is impressed by this intimate knowledge not only, or indeed chiefly, in the individual life brought under our notice, but rather in the same way that nature herself impresses us with the sense of her secret industries.

When Mr. Meredith has to detail or describe he is, as I said in the beginning, as accurate as a naturalist, but as a rule one feels that he knows immeasurably more than he tells—an impression directly the reverse of that we receive from most

nature poetry. There is a back-ground as of the wood's own shade to all his pictures. So is it in those "enchanted woods" of Westermain. The impression of the poem is just that of the woods themselves. The hum by day, as of unseen myriads at their work, talking and singing to themselves somewhere in the under-woods, comes upon us as one reads the poem just as it does on the ear in nature; the echoing pregnant silence by night, on which now and again a queer chuckle or an eerie cry breaks like a mysterious bubble from the deeps of some dark water. These have never been expressed before as they are in Mr. Meredith's poem, the very obscurities of which (and here and there it must be confessed it is impenetrable), seem somehow to help the effect, in some way, perhaps, suggesting dark "bogie-holes," or rich bramble glooms.

That brooding horror of night there is especially impressive, and the sense of life in its "dragonhood" working out its evolutionary salvation in those dark coverts is realised with a vividness that makes the flesh creep.

> "Enter these enchanted woods,
> You who dare.

Nothing harms beneath the leaves
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver, and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of sleep:
Yaffles on a chuckle skim
Low to laugh from branches dim:
Up the pine, where sits the star,
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.
Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
Then beware.
Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare."

Here at once in this first poem do we learn Mr. Meredith's one great nature lesson, his attitude towards her, the simple attitude of utter trust, complete faith. Only by such an approach, he again and again impresses us, can we hope to

know anything of her heart. In any other, she will be a riddle, yea! a horror.

> "You must love the light so well
> That no darkness will seem fell,
> Love it so you could accost
> Fellowly a livid ghost."

So going to her, you shall in time come to read much that was dark and mysterious with cleansed eyes, you shall gain glimpses of her secret processes, and become initiated into her secret lore. You shall come to see how

> "Change is on the wing to bud
> Rose in brain from rose in blood,"

and how

> "Of him who was all maw"

she will by her fiery alchemy of pain make

> "Such a servant as none saw
> Through his days of dragonhood."

So watching we shall come to have glimpses of our own evolution up to spirit—"blood and brain and spirit"—how

> "From flesh unto spirit man grows
> Even here on the sod under sun,"

if we have the patience of faith in nature, content not to understand all her ways,

> "Leaving her the future task,
> Loving her too well to ask."

Mr. Meredith's faith would seem to be, what indeed all faith is, the reliance of instinct. It is like the faith of Browning's Lippo Lippi, for whom life meant intensely and meant good, though he, no more than any other man, had found what that meaning was, but made it meat and drink to seek it out. So, if I read Mr. Meredith aright, he wants no other assurance that "the soul of things is sweet" than such a ramble in the fields as that of his 1851 poems? After all that bloom and colour, all that golden bounty of clustering life, what solemn fooling does our pessimism seem? Like the Shakespeare of his own sonnet—

> "How smiles he at a generation ranked
> In gloomy noddings over life!"

But it is not by our blood that Mr. Meredith bids us read nature. On the contrary, he specially cautions us against doing so. It was reliable may be in June, but hardly so in November, brain alone is safe then. "Never is Earth misread by brain." "Master the blood," says he in autumn,

> "Nor read by chills,
> Earth admonishes: Hast thou ploughed,
> Sown, reaped, harvested grain for the mills,
> Thou hast the light over shadow of cloud."

For this reason *A Reading of Earth* is even more helpful to us than the *Songs and Lyrics*, for it is comparatively easy to have faith in the summer, the time of the obvious "joy of earth;" it is harder when the autumn

> "Narrows the world to my neighbour's gate,
> Paints me life as a wheezy crone."

But are we only to see a meaning in nature's easy summer moods, and seek none in her savage wintry ones? It is true as of old, whom she loveth she chasteneth. With "her passion for old giant-kind" she loves the strong, and she would have him stronger; contention with her ice and her bitter winds will do that for him.

> "Behold the life at ease: it drifts.
> The sharpened life commands its course.
> She winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,
> To dip her chosen in her source:
> Contention is the vital force,
> Whence pluck they brain, her prize of gifts."

"Such meaning in a dagger day!"

Through what ordeal we may have to pass before we can submit our hearts wholly unto nature and say "Behold, she doeth all things well," not only in the autumn of the year, but in that colder winter by the graveside of our loved ones, when there is no light anywhere, no

voice but the voice of the one dark fact—through such ordeal as of ice does the poet take us with him in *A Faith on Trial*, to me, in its stern way, the most spiritually helpful of all modern poems.

The poet's wife lies between life and death, indeed there is no hope of her recovery at all, and he has to face Love's one shuddering question "of the life beyond ashes." He goes out into the fields to face it, amid all the boisterous rejuvenescence of a May morning.

> " The changeful visible face
> Of our Mother I sought for my food;
> Crumbs by the way to sustain.
> Her sentence I knew past grace . . .
> . . . . . .
> I champed the sensations that make
> Of a ruffled philosophy rags.
> For them was no meaning too blunt,
> Nor aspect too cutting of steel.
> This earth of the beautiful beasts,
> Shining up in all colours aflame,
> To them had visage of hags:
> A Mother of aches and jests:
> Soulless, heading a hunt
> Aimless except for the meal.
> Hope, with the star on her front,
> Fear, with an eye in the heel;
> Our links to a Mother of grace;
> They were dead on the nerve, and dead
> For the nature divided in three;
> Gone out of heart, out of brain,
> Out of soul: I had in their place
> The calm of an empty room."

So walking in darkness, sudden as a white light, there flashed upon his eyes from the face of a yew-clad ridge "the pure wild cherry in bloom," the very bush whose blossoming, spring by spring, he and his loved one had hailed together as a symbol of the Eternal Resurrection—

> "Celestial sign
> Of victorious rays over death . . .
> She, the white wild cherry, a tree,
> Earth-rooted, tangibly wood,
> Yet a presence throbbing alive."

But never yet in any spring had her blooming seemed so like a revelation—"there was needed darkness like mine." Her beauty "drew the life" in him "forward," by flashing before it, as in a vision, "the length of the ways he had paced" since those mornings when, "a footfarer out of the dawn to youth's wild forest," she had inspired him "to the dreaming of good illimitable to come." And still her message was the same. She was still holding up that victorious celestial sign, true still, if true then. Have faith, thou poor stricken footfarer, still walk forward as of old, and trust—

> "Dream still
> Through the maze, the mesh and the wreck."

And thus, leaving "the Questions that sow not nor spin," came into his heart a wisdom, here—

"Rough-written, and black,
As of veins that from venom bleed,
I had with the peace within;
Or patience, mortal of peace,
Compressing the surgent strife
In a heart laid open, not mailed,
To the last blank hour of the rack,
When struck the dividing knife;
When the hand that never had failed
In its pressure to mine hung slack."

It is rough comfort that nature gives us, but "we have but to see and hear" to win it.

"Not she gives the tear for the tear.
Weep, bleed, rave, writhe, be distraught,
She is moveless. . . . . .
For the flesh in revolt at her laws,
Neither song nor smile in ruth,
Nor promise of things to reveal,
Has she, nor a word she saith;
We are asking her wheels to pause.
Well knows she the cry of unfaith.
If we strain to the farther shore,
We are catching at comfort near.
Assurances, symbols, saws,
Revelations in legends, light
To eyes rolling darkness, these
Desired of the flesh in affright,
For the which it will swear to adore,
She yields not for prayers at her knees;
The woolly beast bleating will shear.
These are our sensual dreams . . . .
For the road to her soul is the Real."

"I bowed as a leaf in rain;
As a tree when the leaf is shed

To winds in the season at wane;
And when from my soul I said,
May the worm be trampled: smite,
Sacred Reality! power
Filled me to front it aright.
I had come of my faith's ordeal."

In thus writing first on Mr. Meredith's attitude towards nature rather than his poetic expression of that attitude, I shall, doubtless, seem to have placed the cart before the horse. It is, however, an order to the use of which the poems in their entirety naturally impel one. The ideal Art, which Mr. Pater has so finally expressed in his essay on the School of Giorgone, is, of course, well nigh impossible in poetry. It is harder for a poem, perhaps, than for any other form of art to "present that one single effect to the 'imaginative reason,'" which is Beauty. A rigid application of such test would deprive us of much in which we feel rich. The "subject" must almost always obtrude itself on our intelligence; we can hope for little more than that it shall be transfigured. Few poets have the power to give us the pearl in complete solution. Mr. Pater, it will be remembered, instances Shakespeare's songs as examples of such achievement—almost. Keats' *Eve of Saint*

Agnes and The Laureate's *Lotos-Eaters* seem to me to come near a more difficult success—more difficult because of their greater length. I have been wondering, as I write, if in the little poem of *The Meeting* Mr. Meredith has not for once, and once only may be (unless the forty-seventh sonnet of *Modern Love* be allowed as another instance) been so victorious. In a painting of equal power one feels that the subject would make quite a secondary appeal, the colour alone would give us its entire impression of dark tragic beauty; and in the poem one really seems more to see the figures and their portentous setting than to read of them.—

"The old coach-road thro' a common of furze,
With knolls of pine, ran white:
Berries of autumn, with thistles and burrs,
And spider-threads, droop'd in the light.

The light in a thin blue veil peer'd sick;
The sheep grazed close and still;
The smoke of a farm by a yellow rick
Curl'd lazily under a hill.

No fly shook the round of the silver net;
No insect the swift bird chased;
Only two travellers moved and met
Across that hazy waste.

One was a girl with a babe that throve,
Her ruin and her bliss;
One was a youth with a lawless love,
Who claspt it the more for this.

The girl for her babe humm'd prayerful speech;
The youth for his love did pray;
Each cast a wistful look on each,
And either went their way."

Be this as it may, Mr. Meredith cannot, I think, be said to be among the poets of whom such victory is characteristic.

He has more than one resemblance to Browning, but he undeniably has one, and that is at once the power and the disregard of form. That he has such power no one can doubt who has read his *Modern Love*, *The Meeting*, *Phœbus with Admetus*, *Melampus*, or *Love in the Valley*, but that he no less often exhibits that disregard is unhappily equally certain. At the same time, that less perfect part of Mr. Meredith's poetry is not so as Wordsworth's barren patches are, it is far from barren indeed, it is full of song and flowers, though wild as wild; it is like a mass of rich yarn that awaits the weaver, full of threads of wondrous colour, but still yarn. And so it comes about that we cannot speak of Mr. Meredith's poetry as a whole, as we can of Wordsworth's, wherein division of unmistakeable sheep and unmistakeable goats is comparatively easy. To select the perfect and and abide by that would not only be to leave

out a good half of his work, which, whatever its imperfections, is yet full of beauty and power, but would also mean missing a certain peculiarity of flavour which these very poems alone possess. All Mr. Meredith's verse has imagination, music and colour, such as the great among the poets alone bring us, but not all has that orbed completeness which can only come of form. Thus he may be said to give us more poetry than poems, and excepting *Phœbus with Admetus*, *Melampus* and one or two more, it would not, I think, be unjust, for the purpose of a broad division, to include all his nature-poetry under the former head. For they read too often like the first rough drafts of poems, loose in texture, and full of dropped stitches,—here a line of masterly compression, there an inorganic stretch of twelve. It is poetry in the ore, all aglitter with gold, but the refiner has been lazy or indifferent. Yet gold it is, gold of Ophir.

It is doubtless a question of temperament as to whether we value such ore beyond the finished work of lesser men. Their chances of interesting posterity are probably about equal. For, though Art is indeed the one antidote against the opium of time, it has no charm against

the disintegration of the elements. To granite, marble and gold, so long as there are eyes to behold beauty, it can give immortality; but to clay it can bring no more than the life of a day, for it cannot save from the sun and rain. Our fashionable modern poetry is charmingly *petite*, we have much perfect prettiness, fairy bric-a-brac, but will not its airs and graces seem old-fashioned in the *beau-monde* of posterity, with its new *ton* and its own crazes. So long and for that may its art save it. Meanwhile, we do not live by prettiness alone, and though it be true that "delight" is the end of art, there are many degrees of that, degrees mounting from triviality to transfiguration. There is a trivial delight of eye and ear, but "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," and it is our whole moral and intellectual being to which great art brings its so great joy. It can hardly be said that the delight of the ear has been forgotten in our day; indeed, it has become so much the fashion to appeal to it that some critics would seem actually to believe that by its verdict alone must poetry stand or fall: and, certainly, a super-sensitiveness in that organ would seem to be their one critical qualification. Others there are

with other hungers, and some who come to poetry for more than a taste in the mouth find these fondants of fancy little satisfying; and such, if they can only come by some strengthening thought, will not be squeamish at its being a little raw. Among these latter will Mr. Meredith find his larger audience.

I should, however, be doing little justice to poetry which I value so much, if I left any reader of these pages with the impression that for its message only is Mr. Meredith's nature-poetry of worth. My intention is very different. It has one lack, that of the high economy of form; but it has positive qualities of such power and charm that I can conceive many loving it far beyond the more perfect *Modern Love.* It is rich in poetic magic, that glamour which so much art that we feel ought to delight us lacks; it has all that unauthorised charm which irregular features, nevertheless, so often exercise. It haunts you—a certain sign. It abounds in delicious measures, in lines constantly thrilling the memory like shooting stars, in pictures delicate "as the shell of a sound," or forcible to very cruelty, and no poetry could well be stronger or more fecund in its imagery. Its metaphors leap out as inevit-

ably as the stars from an electric jar, it clusters into fancies as naturally as the frost on the pane. Yet, nevertheless, it is not so much poetry to stand and look at, but rather to strip and plunge into like a stream, deep, strong and bracing, bright with many a shining reach, and happy with the laughter of innumerable ripples. To again change the figure, one seems to taste the very health of the earth in it, it has a certain innocent wildness of flavour that, wherever we are, brings the woodland about us, rustling and aromatic, in a breath. It has, indeed, as great a magic of natural association as a whiff of hawthorn. A "read" in it is like a feast of blackberries—not excepting the seeds in the teeth.

VII.—THE CRITICS.

"For if the King like not the comedy,
Why, then, belike, he likes it not, perdy."

IT will scarcely be disputed that hitherto Mr. Meredith has had more to bear in the way of neglect than from overt critical hostility, though he has by no means altogether escaped the "self-appointed thongmen of the press." But now that day has come which "afar off" "B.V."—one of Mr. Meredith's earliest and most faithful disciples—loved to prophesy, the voices of criticism are well-nigh unanimously in his favour; and daily from one quarter or another come critical cuff and kick to impress upon a numb public the latest example of its immemorial purblindness. John Bull, however, is too well represented in all fields to lack champions for any development of his Philistinism whatsoever; and for the matter in hand he

some short time back sent forth his Goliath in the person of a *National Reviewer*, whose article on "Fiction Plethoric and Anæmic," in a number of his journal now about a year old, deserves the notice of all honest men, lovers of fair-play, and *The Egoist*, not as serious criticism, but as that British public's long insensitive disregard of Mr. Meredith finding voice and endeavouring to justify itself, graceless and unrepentant. The article is rude, blustering and dictatorial; and if it were only as potent as it is provincial, it might possibly scare timid converts, whom Mr. Stevenson or Mr. J. M. Barrie have won as subscribers to the recent popular edition of the novels "in monthly volumes."

It serves too as a wholesome warning against the positive tone in criticism, and indeed reminds us once more how futile is the quest of finality therein; a futility, indeed, which even the friendly Meredith "literature" has already most abundantly illustrated. Let us glance for a moment at some little diversity. For example, who has not been tossed on many winds as to which of the master's works is *l'œuvre*, for each one of his novels in succession has by one or another been proclaimed to the

honour. With James Thomson it was *Emilia in England* (then so named), and its sequel *Vittoria;* for Mr. Stevenson it is *The Egoist*, Mr. Barrie seems to lean to *Harry Richmond*, and our *National Reviewer* finds it in "that astonishing feat of unbridled fancy," *The Shaving of Shagpat; The Egoist* being to him "the most entirely wearisome book purporting to be a novel that I ever toiled through in my life." Mr. Courtney has with him so much of the world as is Mr. Meredith's in his unhesitating choice of *Richard Feverel*, while it is probably the most "superior thing" to cry "great is *Diana*."

"Mr. Meredith writes such English as is within the reach of no other living man," said a critic in the *Daily News*. "His style," wrote James Thomson, "is very various and flexible, flowing freely in whatever measures the subject and the mood may dictate. At its best it is so beautiful in simple Saxon, so majestic in rhythm, so noble with noble imagery, so pregnant with meaning, so vital and intense, that it must be ranked among the supreme achievements of our literature. A dear friend said well, when reading *Vittoria:* 'Here truly are words that if you pricked them would bleed.'"

Yet, Mr. Courtney thinks that Mr. Meredith's style is "never easy or flowing," and that "it is impossible to attribute to our author the gift of style" at all, "except in a very special sense"; while the *National Reviewer* aforesaid holds that "no milder word than detestable can be applied to" (that 'supreme achievement of our literature'), "the preposterous style of which" certain quoted "foregoing sentences are examples."

To James Thomson Mr. Meredith's dialogue is the only dialogue we have ever had, it "is full of life and reality, flexile and rich in the genuine unexpected, marked with the keenest distinctions, more like the keen-witted French than the slow and clumsy English"; yet for the *National Reviewer* "it is not dialogue, but a series of mental percussions, its hard staccato movement, and brittle snip-snap . . . tires the reader." The introduction to *Diana*, again, is a famous *crux*. "Of all introductory chapters to an interesting novel" Mr. Courtney considers it "the most irritating," and yet for the accomplished critic of the *Manchester Examiner* it is the one thing in the book. And so on *ad infinitum*, till the brain fairly reels with contradiction, and in agony of soul one cries, "what use indeed is criticism?" Is it of any use?

Waiting for a clearer mood in which to answer the question, when our eyes have grown a little accustomed to these mists of confusion, we may come to see some solid ground whereon to stand. After all, these contradictory figures have a common denominator, and by that may be illustrated what may be regarded as the only, yet very notable, service of criticism. Whatever else is to be proved, this at least is certain—that George Meredith is a centre of power, of whatever nature, in whatever degree, no matter. So much have we learnt by being thus driven, as we may say, "from pillar to post." Here is a notable figure—consider him. This is really all that criticism should venture to say with an air of finality. All beyond this should be said tentatively, with an ever-present regard to that law of relativity which must obtain so long as light is coloured by the glass it shines through. It is not impossible that after all this wrangling about Mr. Meredith's novels, posterity, in its quiet way, will go up to the shelf and lay its hand on "Modern Love." Who knows?

The modern attempt to affiliate criticism to exact science seems to me a strange literary hallucination, for the element of temperament

which finds no admission into the latter must, one would think, be an obvious, and in the nature of things, a permanent disturbance in any science of criticism however broadly based. And yet one sees individual systems applied daily as confidently as though each were generally accepted as long measure, authors weighed one against another with the certitude of an accredited avoirdupois, and various heights of inspiration calculated as though they were church steeples, and criticism trigonometry. If criticism must be dubbed a science, its place is rather among the occult, and the divining rod no bad symbol of its method. We may trust it to discover power in the ore, to find out where gold is hid, and then if we like we may proclaim it for gold sky-high; but measuring and weighing are functions impertinent to it, expect purely for such satisfaction as may accrue to the measurer and the weigher himself or those who chance to be of his mind. It is alike impossible either to measure (once and for all) or to overrate good work; there is, as a popular advertisement puts it, only one quality, "The Best." Some critics have a loose way of talking about *true* poets and *true* poetry, of

bad art and good art, as if art can be appraised like butter into best, middling, and common; work is either poetry or it is not, art or not art, and if it is one or the other it is equal to any. Perfection is equal, and all art stands on the equality of perfection.

All which seems simple enough, yet why do we forget it in fruitless comparative criticism of matters on planes between which no comparison is really possible. On what conceivable ground can Scott be compared with Mr. Meredith? Yet, Mr. Barrie, talking wildly of Mr. Meredith's pre-eminence, gives him a giddy place, "without dethroning Scott."

Because they were both novelists Mr. Barrie and others would doubtless answer. One might as well compare their works because they were both men. Do we not here come upon the mistake that underlies so much criticism? Instead of going to an author to find out "the virtue, the active principle" in his work, and noting it "as a chemist notes some natural element," (to quote the helpful words of Mr. Pater), many critics go to him with abstract definitions of what he ought to be, and by that pattern, should he differ, condemn him. If he cannot be made to fit

the ready-made courtsuit they bring him, well, he must stand shivering in the nakedness of unpopularity and—do they really think?—of oblivion.

The suit into which *The National Reviewer* and others of his persuasion would force Mr. Meredith is a narrow and shallow interpretation of the term novelist? "Is he great at construction? Is he great as a master of narrative? Is he great as an artist in dialogue? Is he great as a creator of character?," they ask all in a breath; to which questions they immediately proceed to attach vivacious negatives, with the alacrity of one filling in "No!" "No!" to the "are you married?", "have you any children?", of certain application forms. No! he does not weave two-pence halfpenny mysteries. No! he does not tell us the old old stories over and over again. No! "he tires the reader." No! Adrian Harley is "a mere tedious personification—a prodigy of boredom to the reader"!!! Are not the types eternally fixed, who shall increase them! unlimited Squires Western, Parsons Adams *ad infinitum*—now these are the types for British art!

Of course, as Mr. Courtney writes, "it may be difficult to defend some of" Mr. Meredith's

novels "on the hypothesis that the primary task of a novelist is to amuse," and such, indeed, despite certain strictures on the ordinary novel reader, would seem to be that *National Reviewer's* hypothesis. "Does he keep awake? will he while away an idle hour?" are the only questions which he would really seem to have had in his mind.

Is the novel, of all forms of art, to be allowed no expansion, is it for ever to coincide with a dictionary definition and be, as old Webster has it, "a fictitious tale or narrative in prose, intended to exhibit the operation of the passions, and particularly of love"? If so, it had, logically, no right to outgrow its first form of the *novella*, and as the nineteenth century has no *Arcadias* it should, therefore, have no novelists. Most will agree that the great elemental passions are the proper, indeed the only, themes for art, but as the work of race-breeding goes on, surely, these are continually becoming "touched to finer issues"—

> "Change is on the wing to bud
> Rose in brain from rose in blood"—

less and less do our lives express themselves in the extremes of action, we are learning to

be merciful to the superlative, to know something of self-control and the sense of proportion. Thus there is more meaning in our little fingers nowadays than in the whole strong right arm of the men of old time, we lift an eyebrow where our ancestors had committed manslaughter. Is picturesque sentiment to be for ever the only language of love, Union Jack heroism the only garb of courage? Has selfishness no other form than cannibalism, or cruelty no subtler form than noisy violence or coarse malignity? Why, therein lies the limitation of the stage, of necessity always more or less restricted to the obvious, the presentation of such life as may be expressed by outward and visible sign; and does all, does the finest, life always find such expression? Is there no drama but that of labelled "act and deed"? Surely, Thought is the most dramatic of all things, yet what stage can give us that?

Of course, our *National Reviewer* knows all this, it is stale enough, may be, for he is one of George Eliot's disciples. She knew the drama of thought and gave it to us in some types, but must "victorious analysis" stop with her or them. There are subtler individualities than Tito,

and shall we not welcome their drama? Sir Willoughby Patterne, of Patterne Hall, is one such, and Mr. Meredith has given us his drama of nerves. By and by there will be others more subtle than he, and then, may be, we shall need a stronger lens.

Wherever there is life there is a story (as wherever there is criticism there must be platitudes), all life stories are equally worth telling, the old as well as the new, the new as well as the old. The *National Reviewer* and his British public would seem to disagree with Mr. Meredith, not because he cannot tell a story, but because he will not tell the particular stories they are solely interested in. The disagreement is natural, we can but applaud what appeals to us, like the squire in Mr. Dobson's poem :—

> "He praised the thing he understood,
> 'Twere well if every critic would."

If the "various shades of grey" are invisible to us, how can we be expected to be interested in them?

With regard to character, is the word to bear no other than the stage significance of "character parts," to be applied only to the whimsical, the eccentric, or the provincial? Again, is

dialogue a *sine qua non* of the novelist's art? Do all characters, do all stories, reveal themselves in talk? The drama postulates that they do, and is an arbitrary form to that extent; but on what compulsion must the novelist? Certainly not from exigency, like the drama, for truer methods lie to his hand. And with regard to the objection against Mr. Meredith's dialogue that all his characters talk Meredithese, that never man spake like this man, and so on, does not the same charge apply equally to Shakespeare and Browning?—yet surely Hamlet or Lippo Lippi are not less alive for that. Literalness is not the essential of dialogue, truth to the spirit of the speaker is. There are many instances where the letter would distort the whole significance of a character; indeed, this is perhaps oftener so than not. If the novelist *is* to employ dialogue, why should he be refused the same freedom in the use of it as the dramatist or the poet?

But, in truth, of all the above stated provisions one alone is fundamental—that the novelist should be able to tell a story. What story and how he tells it is his business, not ours. Dialogue or disquisition matters not, so that the end is

attained, the end of presenting to us a living thing; for in art the end does justify the means. Character-drawing is really included in that fundamental power, for, unless we have a vital grasp of the *dramatis personæ*, the story is not really told at all. A chronicle of what happened to lay figures M or N may be interesting, but till we know who and what they were, it is not a story. Events have no significance in themselves, except to school-boys, who get over the difficulty by appropriating them through their imaginations to themselves. It would really be as true to say that the power of creating character is the novelist's essential gift, for no character can really be drawn apart from the lights and shades of its various relations with other characters and its whole environment, to set forth which involves a story.

To show *how* any being or thing is *alive* is the end of all art, and especially the novelist's. If he can do that for half-a-dozen readers he has succeeded. Why should the "million" or "the average intelligence" be the touch-stone. Fame, either present or posthumous, is no test whatever. It may be, as it would seem to be in Mr. Meredith's case, that the novelist's

methods of presentation are eccentric and difficult, or that his particular story needs a new technology like science. He may write in the language of an outlandish or forgotten people, in Norwegian or in Latin. If so he must not expect to be as lucky as Ibsen, or grumble if he shares the oblivion of "Vinny" Bourne. There is no reason why he should do his work in the vernacular. It is time the superstition of "good plain Saxon" were exploded. To do much with little is well, but to *do* is the essential, and, once done, neither number and variety of tools, nor prodigality of materials, can depreciate perfection.

That Mr. Meredith does not write the vernacular, at least in that of his work which is most really his, does not so much matter as would at first sight appear; for, supposing it imaginable as written in any other style, in their own "plain Saxon," would *The Egoist* have any stronger appeal for "the general" than it has at present? Surely not; for though to some of us there is presented an unmistakeably living man, and the greatest master cannot do more than make his creations alive, and a story much like tragedy beneath its "comedy in narrative," he

is a man who, could they even be made to understand him, could not possibly interest them; and it is a tragedy which they would not appreciate, because there are not four deaths in the fifth act.

You cannot really appeal to the heart without first appealing to the brain, and the average brain is still busy with the obvious. In this respect Mr. Meredith is really in the position of a poet's poet, one might call him the novelist's novelist. Indeed, it is a question for consideration, it seems to me, if this is not the position of every great artist. It is a commonplace to say that he is always in advance of his age, but does posterity ever catch him up? There is a great deal more cant than truth in the chatter about the universal appeal of Shakespeare, and who is there that reads Dante? The fact is that posterity is as much in the dark about him as his age was, but a few dead critics having made a noise about him, it tries to get over its difficulty by unintelligently making a superstition of him. Was it Thoreau who said that the great artists have really been taken by "the world" on the faith of a few critics? Anyhow that other fine saying was certainly

his:—"The great poets have never been read because it takes great poets to read them."

Yet there are at least two of Mr. Meredith's books that should make that "universal appeal," dealing with interests near home, and written mainly in the vernacular. Surely there is plenty of "human interest," and ruddy enough humour too, in *Evan Harrington*, and I cannot imagine a public taking *Adam Bede*, and finding nothing for itself in *Rhoda Fleming*. *Richard Feverel* is largely on another plane, and makes a subtler appeal, and yet if it gave one critic (I forget where I read his words) the idea that Mr. Meredith should be able to write a good boy's book, there must be much in it that would suit the public, for, after all, "boys' books" are really what the public wants. "Plenty of blood and brawn, never mind brain," would seem to be their demand and that of a certain so-called "masculine" school of critics. Do they ever reflect that the craving for that so-called masculine comes of the feminine side of our nature?

But while it is really Mr. Meredith's stories for which critics have no taste, it is about his style that they make most fuss, it is even a stumbling-block to the wise, at times. We have

glanced at some diversity of opinion regarding it already. All agree in quoting the "Ferdinand and Miranda" passage in *Richard Feverel* as perfection, fewer seem to have come across the "Wilming Weir" chapter in *Sandra Belloni*, but his phrase-making! It seems hopeless to expect agreement upon that. With a polite *National Reviewer* it stands for nothing but "intellectual coxcombry," and yet who will quite agree with Mr. Barrie when though he hails Mr. Meredith most brilliant of living writers, yet, making the strangest choice of pet phrases, he says of others "these are misses."

What Mr. Meredith's style is to me I have already striven to express, and some of those "misses," some of the most heinous examples of "coxcombry," have already served me as illustrations. Such is man! But *cui bono.* It is all in the point of view, as Mr. Stevenson has said. Criticism is perhaps the one thing in which we must live to ourselves. At most the critic is but the tribune of a temperament, the representative of a certain intellectual interest. The ideal critic is like the ideal king, if we could all agree about his wisdom, his power and so forth, there would be no need of

politics; so if we could all agree upon the man who had the finest culture with the most sensitive temperament, criticism might pretend to finality: but, meanwhile, we will do well to follow Mr. Pater's advice and attempt only the expression of what a certain work or personality is to ourselves—though in doing so do let us be careful of other people's feelings. It is in art as in religion, we all worship the same thing under different forms; there is but one Spirit of Beauty, and whatever artistic fetish—be it "masculine" or what you please—our neighbour is kneeling before, we can tell by his face and by his voice whether he sees that spirit there. Cannot we keep the jarring intolerance of sectarianism outside the pleasant lettered Acadame, and be neighbourly over our likes and dislikes; is it not possible to take both Squire Western and Sir Willoughby into our regard, or at least to hold one without anathemising our fellow because he claims to be capable of appreciating both. For, be sure that the man who can appreciate the Sir Willoughbys is he who brings the highest relish for the Squire Westerns. The greatest danger to other folks' feelings lies in comparison. Why we make them

I do not know, they are constantly growing out of date, and while current they are futile. Nothing so much as criticism impresses one how truly odious they are. It is well to admire Mr. Meredith's skill with boys in *Richard Feverel;* indeed, we would not lose that splendid fight for much, but why need Mr. Barrie be so positive that Thackeray's boys are not so genuine, why dethrone Traddles, why say that there are no boys like them in contemporary fiction,—even if we have been so industrious as to have reaped so large a field. There are boys in *A Daughter of Heth,* surely. Criticism should not need to be dated, and such if it have any value at all, would need to be. Richard Feverel and Ripton Thompson are *boys,* typical boys, real and living. Is not that enough? The comparative method, of course, has its uses, but latterly it has sadly overgrown them, and the critics are all too many who tell us who and what a writer is like and is not like, but leave us almost wholly in the dark as to what he *is.* Especially do they love to compare him with the most outlandish authors of their acquaintance, apparently scorning English standards, and recognising no literature nearer than the Kamschatkan.

Let us, too, avoid the superlative, it is a vulgar form, not half so dignifying as the simple positive. A poor civic tinsel of a word, we can only wear it in our little town and that only in our little day. For it is but a relative term, its value must be for ever fluctuating, but plain good endures and no contingency can ever set to it a limitation. The parable of the Talents is suggestive here. The man who brought two was called good and faithful, but he who had five was called nothing more. So Art considers her children. In the House of Fame there are many mansions.

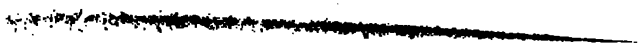
For me, may be for you, reader, Sandra and Diana belong to Art's own dream of great women. Lucy and Richard by the river side are with the great lovers; Sir Willoughby takes a place in your moral mythology, he is your wholesome *bête noire*, every day you cry him *Retro;* Roy Richmond holds you by the heart, Adrian Harley by the brain and somehow by the heart too; for the more you think of him the less you fear his cynic pose. May be you love not Thackeray's inns better than the "Aurora," you often think of Evan Harrington and the postilion, of that delicious ride of his

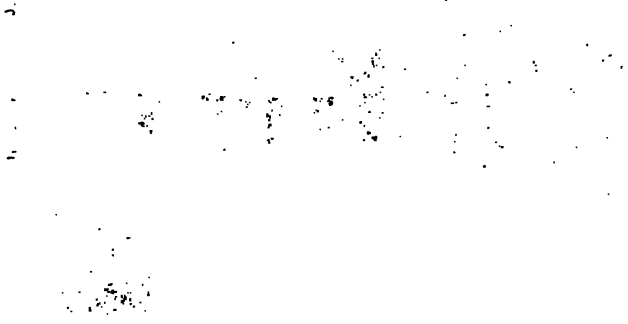
with Polly, and who could forget the great Countess! Dr. Middleton and that aged and great wine have perhaps made your cheap port seem the richer at your occasional symposia; you know a good part of that "leg" passage by heart, I dare say; and often find Meredithese floating on your talk. You have quoted "the vomit" as you poured with the stream from the theatre; may be you have known a dear face "swim" up to you "for a brilliant instant on tears," and been grateful to Mr. Meredith for that so offensive phrase, and thoughts *have* rung little silver bells through your brain in the midnight. When your blood runs a little thick, have you never taken down *Vittoria*, and lived over again that great fight in the Stelvio pass; or harrowed yourself once more with old Squire Beltham's slaughter of poor Roy Richmond by his merciless shuddering invective?

You have felt you had beauty, comedy, tragedy, in all these, and in how many other characters and scenes. So have I. But *he* has not. Let us pray.

John Robb, Printer, Egremont, Cheshire.

Box Hill
Surrey
Sept 22nd 1850





GEORGE MEREDITH

AND HIS REVIEWERS

[1850—90]

A BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY

JOHN LANE

PREFACE.

As my first attempt in the direction of compiling a serious bibliography I put this forward tentatively, being fully conscious that it must be incomplete, in spite of its having been a labour of love. I am naturally anxious to add to it in any subsequent edition, but should no other edition be called for I shall still be glad to receive any information bearing on the subject, for my own delectation; at any rate I hope it may be my privilege to extend it, by Mr. Meredith being spared to us for many more years of vigorous and characteristic work.

It is highly probable that I have failed to find all Mr. Meredith's uncollected and fugitive pieces, but I earnestly hope that this effort will induce others who have a special knowledge of the subject to communicate with me.

I am aware that Mr. Meredith contributed to *The Morning Post* and *The Pall Mall Gazette* in a journalistic capacity. His articles are unsigned save by the Hall-Mark of

his genius, and I have not attempted to record them. The writer has said "let them lie," and in such a matter surely the author's wish should be regarded.

I have, doubtless, omitted many reviews of Mr. Meredith's works, but I shall always be grateful for references to omissions. It seems to me of greater interest to append the writers' names when possible; in a few cases I have succeeded (those within parentheses), and the result is curiously interesting. For instance, Mr. W. E. Henley *owns* to having reviewed that masterpiece, "The Egoist," in four different places—*The Athenæum*, *Academy*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, and *The Teacher*. From that period the tide turned in favour of Mr. Meredith's works, and no one can doubt that Mr. Henley's brilliant criticisms, [reprinted in his "Views and Reviews"] which won the praise of James Thomson ["B.V."], * did much to open the eyes of critics and readers alike.

*Extract from Thomson's diary:—"*Saturday, Nov. 1, 1879. Athenæum*—Opening article on *Egoist*. The first critique on any of George Meredith's books I have ever come across, in which the writer showed thorough knowledge of his works, and anything like an adequate appreciation of his wonderful genius."
—*Vide* James Thomson's Life, by H. S. SALT, p. 140. 1890.

There was a remarkable review of "Richard Feverel" in 1859 in *The Times*, which however has since accorded to Mr. Meredith only short notices of two of his novels. James Thomson's "Note on George Meredith" [reprinted in his "Essays and Phantasies"] on the appearance of "Beauchamp's Career" [1876] is quite a notable thing : the *Athenæum* review of the same work is hardly less noteworthy. More recently in the *Saturday Review* [1886] appeared an excellent article on "Mr. George Meredith's Novels" by an anonymous writer whose name—as well as that of *The Times* reviewer of "Richard Feverel" and the *Athenæum* reviewer of "Beauchamp's Career."—I should like to have been able to give, as they must have been the means of enormously increasing the number of Mr. Meredith's readers. At the same time it must be confessed that many of the criticisms that have appeared on Mr. Meredith's work, whilst not unfavourable, clearly indicate that the writers were not in sympathy with him.

Mr. Meredith's printed letters are provokingly scarce, I only know of five, four of which are fragmentary. Those who have been privileged to read his letters will share in my lament, for

it is from his epistolary writings that we best learn to know the man, in them he—as it were—bares his soul.

In the preparation of this work I have received generous help from Mr. John Morley, M.P., Mr. Theodore Watts, Mr. Kegan Paul, Mr. William Sharp, Mr. Frederick Chapman, Dr. Garnett, Mr. S. T. Whiteford, Mr. Gleeson White, Mr. Elkin Mathews; especially I wish to thank Mr. F. H. Evans and Mr. Arthur Symons.

My thanks are also due to Mr. A. C. Swinburne for kindly permitting me to reprint his noble letter to the *Spectator* in defence of "Modern Love" and to Mr. William Morton Fullerton for kindly allowing me to use his drawing—sketched for him by Mr. W. Maxse Meredith—of Mr. George Meredith's *Chalet*, the birthplace of so many of the characters in that brilliant galaxy the like of which the world has not seen since Shakspere.

JOHN LANE.

37, SOUTHWICK STREET,
HYDE PARK, W.
October, 1890.

THE

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF GEORGE MEREDITH.

1850.

Extracts from a Letter, dated November 17th, 1850, to Parker (the Publisher), in reference to the publication of "Poems," 1851.

Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson, & Hodge's Sale Catalogue of Autograph Letters. Lot 144, p. 22, Nov. 27th, 1889.

Mr. Elkin Mathews purchased this lot. The letter is now in the possession of Julian Marshall, Esq.

POEMS:

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH.

Eos! blest Goddess of the Morning, hear
The blind Orion praying on the hill.
And in thine odorous breath his spirit steep
That he, the soft gold of thy gleaming hand
Passing across his heavy lids, sealed down
With weight of many nights and night-like days
May feel as keenly as a new-born child,
And through it, learn as purely to behold
The face of Nature. . . . .
His blind eyes wept.

R. H. HORNE'S "Orion."

LONDON:
JOHN W. PARKER & SON,
WEST STRAND.

Fcap. 8vo, pp. 160, and Errata at end.

TO

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK, ESQ.

THIS VOLUME

IS DEDICATED WITH THE PROFOUND ADMIRATION AND AFFECTIONATE

RESPECT OF HIS

SON-IN-LAW.

WEYBRIDGE,
MAY, 1851.

CONTENTS:

*The Olive Branch.
Love Within the Lover's Breast.
The Wild Rose and the Snowdrop.
The Death of Winter.
The Moon is Alone in the Sky.
John Lackland.
The Sleeping City.
The Poetry of Chaucer.
,, Spencer,
,, Shakespeare.
,, Milton.
,, Southey.
,, Coleridge.
,, Shelley.
,, Wordsworth.
,, Keats.
Violets.
Angelic Love.
Twilight Music.
Requiem.
The Flower of the Ruins.
The Rope of Aurora.
South-West-Wind in the Woodland.
Will o' the Wisp.
Fair and False.
Two Wedded Lovers watch'd the rising Moon.
I cannot Lose thee for a Day.
Daphne.
Should thy Love Die.

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*I am informed that this piece was first published in some magazine, but I have been unable to trace it. I should be glad if any reader can give me a reference to an earlier appearance of this, or of any other poem in this collection.

London by Lamplight.
Under Boughs of breathing May.
Pastorals (see pp. 101—5, an extended version of this fine poem appears at pp. 87—100 of "Poems and Lyrics," 1883).
Beauty Rohtraut.
To a Skylark.
Sorrows and Joys.
The Flower unfolds its dawning cup.
Thou to me art such a Spring.
Antigone.
Swathed round in Mist and Crown'd with Cloud.
No, no, the falling Blossom is no sign.
The Two Blackbirds.
July.
I would I were the Drop of Rain.
Come to me in any shape.
The Shipwreck of Idomeneus.
The Longest Day.
To Robin Redbreast.
The Daisy now is out upon the green.
Sunrise.
Pictures of the Rhine.
To a Nightingale.

REVIEWS—*The Leader*, pp. 635-636, July 5, 1851. *The Spectator*, p. 642, July 5, 1851. *The Athenæum*, p. 895, Aug. 23, 1851. *The Critic*, pp. 539-540 [by William Michael Rossetti], Nov. 15, 1851. *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 44, pp. 629-631, Dec., 1851 [by Chas. Kingsley.] *The Curio*, (U.S.A.), pp. 265-267, by J. Rogers Rees, Jan.-Feb., 1888.

Invitation to the Country (Poem). *Fraser's Magazine*, August, 1851, vol. 44, pp. 217-218.
(Not Reprinted).

1856.

THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT. An Arabian Entertainment. By GEORGE MEREDITH. London: Chapman and Hall, 193, Piccadilly, 1856, crown 8vo, pp. viii. 384

This Edition has the following prefatory Note:

It has seemed to me that the only way to tell an Arabian Story was by imitating the style and manners of the Oriental Story-tellers. But such an attempt, whether successful or not, may read like a translation: I therefore think it better to prelude this Entertainment by an avowal that it springs from no Eastern source, and is in every respect an original Work. G. M.

December 8, 1855.

The Second Edition of this work was issued in 1865, by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Series of "Standard Editions of Popular Authors," with a Frontispiece of "Bhanavar among the Serpents of Lake Kasatis;" designed by F. Sandys and engraved by J. Saddler. Crown 8vo, pp. viii. 283.

The following new prefatory Note was written for this Edition:—

"It has been suggested to me by one who has no fear of Allegories on the banks of the Nile, that the hairy Shagpat must stand to mean umbrageous Humbug conquering the sons

of men; and that Noorna bin Noorka represents the Seasons, which help us, if there is health in us, to dispel the affliction of his shadow; while my heroic Shibli Bagarag is actually to be taken for Circumstance, which works under their changeful guidance towards our ultimate release from bondage, but with a disappointing apparent waywardness. The excuse for such behaviour as this youth exhibits, is so good that I would willingly let him wear the grand mask hereby offered to him. But, though his backslidings cry loudly for some sheltering plea, or garb of dignity, and though a story-teller should be flattered to have it supposed that anything very distinct was intended by him, the Allegory must be rejected altogether. The subtle Arab who conceived Shagpat, meant either very much more, or he meant less; and my belief is, that, designing in his wisdom simply to amuse, he attempted to give a larger embrace to time than is possible to the profound dispenser of Allegories, which are mortal; which, to be of any value, must be perfectly clear, and, when perfectly clear, are as little attractive as Mrs. Malaprop's reptile."

This Edition has the following dedication:—"Affectionately inscribed to William Hardman, of Norbiton Hall."

(Sir William Hardman, for 18 years Editor of *The Morning Post*, died on September 11th, 1890, aged 62).

Another Edition was issued by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in Pictorial Boards, at 2/-, 12mo, 1872.

In this issue the Prefatory Note of the second edition is repeated.

Reprinted, with "Farina," by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Edition of 1887 and 1889, in both of which the prefatory notes are omitted. Crown 8vo, pp. vi. 411, and conclusion.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

REVIEWS.—*The Spectator*, p. 1366, Dec. 20, 1855. *The Critic*, p. 15, Jan. 1, 1856. *The Athenæum*, pp. 6—7, Jan. 5, 1856. *The Leader*, pp. 13—17, Jan. 5, 1856. *Saturday Review*, p. 216, Jan. 19, 1856. *Westminster Review*, No. 18, new series, vol. 11, pp. 638—9 (by George Eliot), April, 1856. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, May 7, 1887. *The Literary World* (Boston), p. 285, Sept. 3, 1887.

1857.

FARINA: A LEGEND OF COLOGNE. By GEORGE MEREDITH, author of the "Shaving of Shagpat." London: Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill. 1857. Crown 8vo, pp. 244.

A Second Edition, with an engraved title page by Mr. W. J. Linton, after the design of Mr. Walter Crane, was issued by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., 1865, cloth, crown 8vo, pp. 248.

This work also appeared in 1865 in Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co.'s "Standard Authors" Series, at 1/- With the exception of the engraved title being used for the paper cover, this edition is identical with the second. In this series the work went into at least three editions, but I have only been able to collate the first and third editions in this form, the latter differs slightly in-as-much as it was issued by Chapman & Hall, 1868, and has a printed title page, Mr. Crane's design (in colours) being used for the cover.

Reprinted with the "Shaving of Shagpat," by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1887 and 1889, crown 8vo, pp. vi. 411, and conclusion.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

REVIEWS—*The Spectator*, pp. 886-887, Aug. 22, 1857. *The Examiner*, p. 532, Aug., 1857. *The Saturday Review*, p. 207, Aug. 29, 1857. *The Leader*, p. 837, Aug. 29, 1857. *The Critic*, p. 394, Sept. 1, 1857. *The Daily News*, Sept. 3, 1857. *The Globe*, Sept. 7, 1857. *Westminster Review*, pp. 597—599, No. 24, vol. 12, new series (by George Eliot), Oct., 1857. *Morning Post*, Nov. 20, 1857. *Athenæum*, pp. 1483—1484, Nov. 28, 1857. *Eclectic Review*, pp. 457—461, May, 1858.

1859.

THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL. A HISTORY OF FATHER AND SON. By GEORGE MEREDITH. In three vols. London: Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly. 1859. Crown 8vo, pp. xii. 1046.

Second Edition. Frontispiece by C. O. M(urray). One vol., 8vo, pp. 484. Kegan Paul. 1878.

In this edition, and in all subsequent ones, the work is largely altered and condensed.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the collected Editions of 1885, 1888, and 1889. 8vo, pp. 472.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English collected Editions, and are identical with them.

A Colonial Edition, identical with the above, was printed for Messrs. G. Robertson & Co. in 1887.

This work is included in Baron Tauchnitz's "Collection of British Authors." In 2 vols., pp. 632. 1875.

COMPRESSED TRANSLATIONS.

L'Épreuve de Richard Feverel: Roman de la vie Anglaîse de M. George Meredith. Par M. E. D. Forgues.

Revue des Deux Mondes.—Premiére Partie, April 15, 1865—Deuxième Partie, May 1, 1865—Dernière Partie, May 15, 1865.

Riccardo Feverel. Per Giorgio Meredith. Versione dall' inglese di L. Padoa. Milano: Emilio Croci, Editore. 1873. 2 vols, 12mo, pp. 240. Pictorial paper wrappers.

REVIEWS—*The Critic*, pp. 6-7, July 2, 1859. *The Leader*, p. 798, July 2, 1859. *The Athenæum*, p. 48, July 9, 1859. *Saturday Review*, pp. 48-49, July 9, 1859. *The Spectator*, pp. 717-718, July 9, 1859. *The Times*, p. 5, Oct. 14, 1859. *Westminster Review*, vol. 16, N.S., p. 627, Oct. 14, 1859. *Cope's Tobacco Plant*, p. 5 (by James Thomson), May, 1879. *Time*, vol. II., N.S., pp. 751-752 (by Arthur Symons), Dec., 1883. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, Dec. 12, 1885. *Vanity Fair*, Jan. 16, 1886.

The Song of Courtesy (Poem), with an Illustration by J. Tenniel. *Once a Week*, July 9, 1859, vol. I., p. 30.

(Not reprinted).

The Three Maidens (Poem), with an Illustration by Hablot K. Browne. *Once a Week*, July 30, 1859, vol. I., p. 96.

(Not reprinted).

Over the Hills (Poem), with an Illustration by Hablot K. Browne. *Once a Week*, August 20, 1859, vol. I., p. 160.

(Not reprinted).

The Crown of Love (Poem), with an Illustration by J. E. Millais. *Once a Week*, Dec. 31, 1859, vol. II., p. 10.

(Not reprinted).

1861.

EVAN HARRINGTON. By GEORGE MEREDITH. Author of the "Ordeal of Richard Feverel," the "Shaving of Shagpat," etc. In 3 vols. London: Bradbury & Evans, 11, Bouverie Street. 1861. Crown 8vo, pp. xv. 863. In 47 chapters.

This work originally appeared in 47 chapters, in *Once a Week*, with 40 illustrations by Charles Keene, from Feb. 11 to Oct. 13, 1860, inclusive, under the title of "Evan Harrington; or, He would be a Gentleman:"

Second Edition, with a Frontispiece by Charles Keene, was issued by Messrs. Bradbury & Evans, 1866. 1 vol, crown 8vo, pp. iv. 516.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1885 and 1889, pp. iv. 519.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneosly with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

A Colonial Edition, identical with the above, was printed for Messrs. G. Robertson & Co., in 1888.

Unauthorised Edition.

This work was published in America, by Messrs. Harper & Bros., in 1860, before it had been reprinted in this Country, with the sub-title, as follows:—"Evan Harrington; or, He would be a Gentleman." p. 492, 12mo, cloth, $1.50.

Reviews.—*Harper's Monthly Magazine*, vol. 22, p. 260, Jan., 1861. *Saturday Review*, Jan. 19, 1861. *The Spectator*, p. 66, Jan. 19, 1861. *The Examiner*, p. 183, March 23, 1861. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, Dec. 12, 1885. *Vanity Fair*, June 20, 1886. *Time*, vol. II, new series [by Arthur Symons], pp. 631-633, Nov., 1885.

1862.

MODERN LOVE AND POEMS OF THE ENGLISH ROADSIDE, WITH POEMS AND BALLADS. By GEORGE MEREDITH, author of 'The Shaving of Shagpat,' 'The Ordeal of Richard Feverel,' etc. London: Chapman and Hall, 193, Piccadilly. 1862. Extra fcap., 8vo, pp. viii. 216.

Affectionately inscribed to Captain Maxse, R.N.

CONTENTS:

Grandfather Bridgeman.
The Meeting (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Sept. 1st, 1860, vol. III., p. 276, with an illustration by J. E. Millais).
Modern Love.
Juggling Jerry (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Sept. 3rd, 1859, vol. I., pp. 189-90, under the title of "The Last Words of Juggling Jerry," with an illustration by Hablot K. Browne).
The Old Chartist (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Feb. 8th, 1862, vol. 6, pp. 182-184, with an illustration by F. Sandys).
The Beggar's Soliloquy (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, March 30th, 1861, vol iv., pp. 378-9, with an illustration by Charles Keene).
The Patriot Engineer (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Dec. 14th, 1861, vol. v., pp. 685-7, with an illustration by Charles Keene).
Cassandra.
The Young Usurper.
Margaret's Bridal-Eve.
Marian.

The Head of Bran (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Feb. 4th, 1860, vol. ii., pp. 131-2, with an illustration by John E. Millais).

By Morning Twilight.

Autumn Even-Song (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Dec. 3rd, 1859, vol. i., p. 464)

Unknown Fair Faces.

Phantasy (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Nov. 23rd, 1861, vol. v., pp. 601-2).

Shemselnihar.

"A Roar through the tall twin Elm-Trees."

"When I would Image."

"A chafe at Darkness."

By the Rosanna (originally appeared in *Once a Week*, Oct. 19th, 1861, vol. v., pp. 460-2).

Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn.

The Doe: a Fragment from "Wandering Willie."

REVIEWS—*The Critic*, p. 487, May 17, 1862. **The Spectator*, pp. 580-581, May 24, 1862. *The Athenæum*, p. 719, May 31, 1862; *Westminster Review*, vol. 22, N.S., p. 284, July, 1862.

*This notice evoked the following interesting letter from Mr. Swinburne, which has never before been reprinted:—

The Spectator, June 7, 1862, pp. 632—3.

MR. GEORGE MEREDITH'S "Modern Love."

Sir,

I cannot resist asking the favour of admission for my protest against the article on Mr. Meredith's last volume of poems in the *Spectator* of May 24th. That I personally have for the writings, whether verse or prose, of Mr. Meredith, a most sincere and deep admiration is no doubt a matter of infinitely small moment. I wish only, in default of a better, to appeal seriously on general grounds against this sort of criticism as applied to one of the leaders of English literature. To any fair attack Mr.

Meredith's books of course lie as much open as another man's; indeed, standing where he does, the very eminence of his post makes him perhaps more liable than a man of less well-earned fame to the periodical slings and arrows of publicity. Against such criticism no one would have a right to appeal, whether for his own work or for another's. But the writer of the article in question blinks at stating the fact that he is dealing with no unfledged pretender. Any work of a man who has won his spurs and fought his way to a foremost place among the men of his time, must claim at least a grave consideration and respect. It would hardly be less absurd, in remarking on a poem by Mr. Meredith, to omit all reference to his previous work, and treat the present book as if its author had never tried his hand at such writing before, than to criticise the *Légende des Siécles*, or (coming to a nearer instance) the *Idylls of the King*, without taking into account the relative position of the great English or the greater French poet. On such a tone of criticism as this any one who may chance to see or hear of it has a right to comment.

But even if the case were different, and the author were now at his starting-point, such a review of such a book is surely out of date. Praise or blame should be thoughtful, serious, careful, when applied to a work of such subtle strength, such depth of delicate power, such passionate and various beauty, as the leading poem of Mr. Meredith's volume: in some points, as it seems to me (and in this opinion I know that I have weightier judgments than my own to back me) a poem above the aim and beyond the reach of any but its author. Mr. Meredith is one of the three or four poets now alive whose work, perfect or imperfect, is always as noble in design, as it is often faultless in result. The present critic falls foul of him for dealing with "a deep and painful subject on which he has no conviction to express." There are pulpits enough for all preachers in prose; the business of verse-writing is hardly to express convictions; and if some poetry, not without merit of its kind, has at times dealt in dogmatic morality, it is all the worse and all the weaker for that.

As to subject, it is too much to expect that all schools of poetry are to be for ever subordinate to the one just now so much in request with us, whose scope of sight is bounded by the nursery walls; that all Muses are to bow down before her who babbles, with lips yet warm from their pristine pap, after the dangling delights of a child's coral; and jingles with flaccid fingers one knows not whether a jester's or a baby's bells. We have not too many writers capable of duly handling a subject worth the serious interest of men. As to execution, take almost any sonnet at random out of this series, and let any man qualified to judge for himself of metre, choice of expression, and splendid language, decide on its claims. And, after all, the test will be unfair, except as regards metrical or pictorial merit; every section of this great progressive poem being connected with the other by links of the finest and most studied workmanship. Take, for example, that noble sonnet, beginning

> "We saw the swallows gathering in the skies,"

a more perfect piece of writing no man alive has ever turned out; witness these three lines, the grandest perhaps of the book:

> "And in the largeness of the evening earth,
> Our spirit grew as we walked side by side;
> *The hour became her husband, and my bride;*"

but in transcription it must lose the colour and effect given it by its place in the series; the grave and tender beauty, which makes it at once a bridge and a resting-place between the admirable poems of passion it falls among. As specimens of pure power, and depth of imagination at once intricate and vigorous, take the two sonnets on a false passing reunion of wife and husband; the sonnet on the rose; that other beginning:

> "I am not of those miserable males
> Who sniff at vice, and daring not to snap,
> Do therefore hope for Heaven."

And, again, that earlier one:

> "All other joys of life he strove to warm."

Of the shorter poems which give character to the book I have not space to speak here; and as the critic has omitted noticing the most valuable and important (such as the "Beggar's Soliloquy," and the "Old Chartist," equal to Béranger for completeness of effect and exquisite justice of style, but noticeable for a thorough dramatic insight, which Béranger missed through his personal passions and partialities), there is no present need to go into the matter. I ask you to admit this protest simply out of justice to the book in hand, believing as I do that it expresses the deliberate unbiassed opinion of a sufficient number of readers to warrant the insertion of it, and leaving to your consideration rather their claims to a fair hearing than those of the book's author to a revised judgment. A poet of Mr. Meredith's rank can no more be profited by the advocacy of his admirers than injured by the rash or partial attack of his critics.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

1864.

EMILIA IN ENGLAND. By GEORGE MEREDITH, author of "Evan Harrington," "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," "The Shaving of Shagpat." In three volumes. London: Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly. 1864. Crown 8vo, pp. xii. 929.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall in the Collected Editions of 1887 and 1889, under the title of "Sandra Belloni." Originally "Emilia in England," pp. vii. 462.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and they are identical with them.

A COMPRESSED TRANSLATION.

Sandra Belloni: Roman de la Vie Anglaise, de M. George Meredith. Par M. E. D. Forgues. *

Revue des Deux Mondes—Premiere Partie, Nov. 15, 1864. Seconde Partie, Dec. 1, 1864. Dernière Partie, Dec. 15, 1864.

* It may be interesting to note that Mr. Arthur Symons has recently picked up at Paris, on the Quai des Grands Augustins, first editions of *Richard Feverel* and *Emilia in England*—both of them presentation copies. The flyleaf of the former has "With the Author's compliments," and, below, "M. Buloz," not in Mr. Meredith's handwriting. On the title-page of the latter Mr. Meredith has written: "Monsieur E. D. Forgues Hommages de l'Auteur,"

Reprinted in a volume as follows:—

Sandra Belloni: L'Anneau D'Amasis; La Famille Du Docteur. Imitations de l'Anglais. Par E. D. Forgues. Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie., Boulevard Saint Germain, No. 77. 1866. 8vo, pp, 355, of which "Sandra Belloni" occupies the first 212 pages.

REVIEWS—*The Reader*, (by Richard Garnett), April 23, 1864. *The Athenæum*, p. 609, April 30, 1864. *Saturday Review*, p. 660, May 28, 1864. *Westminster Review*, p. 253, July, 1864, *The Examiner*, p, 469, July 23, 1864. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5. June 14, 1886. *Time* (by Arthur Symons), vol. iii., N.S., pp. 379-380, March, 1886.

The Story of Sir Arnulph (Poem). *Once a Week*, Jan. 23, 1864, vol. X., p. 126.
(Not reprinted).

1865.

RHODA FLEMING: A STORY. By GEORGE MEREDITH, author of the "Ordeal of Richard Feverel," "Evan Harrington," etc., etc. In 3 vols. London: Tinsley Brothers, Catherine Street, Strand. 1865. Crown 8vo, pp. xii. 878.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1886 and 1889, crown 8vo, pp. vii. 399.

These editions are considerably revised.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

This work, with an Introductory Note of three pages, signed "P. R.," is included in the "Colonial Edition" of "Petherick's Collection of Favourite and Approved Authors," 1889.

REVIEWS.—*Athenæum*, p. 495, Oct. 14, 1865. *Saturday Review*, p. 489, Oct. 14, 1865. *Morning Post*, p. 2, Oct. 18, 1865. *Pall Mall Gazette*, pp. 842—3, Oct. 26, 1865. *Westminster Review*, vol. 29, new series, p. 285, Jan., 1866. *Vanity Fair*, Jan. 26, 1886. *Athenæum* (New Edition), pp. 137—138 (by W. E. Henley), July 31, 1886. *Time*, vol. 4, new series, pp. 248—249 (by Arthur Symons), Aug., 1886.

1867.

*VITTORIA. By GEORGE MEREDITH. In three volumes. Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly. 1867. Post 8vo, pp. xii. 938. In 46 chapters.

This work originally appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, in 46 chapters, from Jan. 15th, 1866, to Dec. 1st, 1866, inclusive.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1886 and 1889, pp. vii. 500

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

REVIEWS—*Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 1011, Jan. 25, 1867. *The Saturday Review*, p. 149, Feb. 2, 1867. *The Spectator*, pp. 161-162, Feb. 9, 1867. *The Athenæum*, p. 248, Feb. 23, 1867. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, June 14, 1886.

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* The references in this work to "The Chief" are to Mazzini, and I have seen or heard it stated that an Italian newspaper had reprinted these references as the best estimate of their great patriot, but as I have been unable to verify this statement I should feel obliged to any correspondents who would supply me with information on the subject.

La Maison Forestière.
(Critical Note on).

The Fortnightly Review, Jan. 1, 1867, p. 126-128.
(Not reprinted).

Training in Theory and Practice. By Archibald Maclaren.
(Critical Note on).

The Fortnightly Review, March, 1867, pp. 380-382.
(Not reprinted).

Lines on a Friend Visiting America. (Poem).
The Fortnightly Review, Dec., 1867, pp. 727-731.
(Not reprinted)

Saint Paul (a Poem). By Frederick H. Myers.
(Critical Note on).

1868.

The Fortnightly Review, Jan., 1868, pp. 115-117.
(Not reprinted).

Countess of Brownlow's Reminescences.
(Critical Note on).

The Fortnightly Review, Feb. 1, 1868. pp. 229-232.
(Not reprinted).

Mr. Robert Lytton's Poems.
(SIGNED ARTICLE).

The Fortnightly Review, June, 1868, pp. 658-672.
(Not reprinted).

1869.

Homer's Iliad in English Rhymed Verse. By Charles Merevale.
(Critical Note on).

The Fortnightly Review, May, 1869, pp. 629-630.
(Not reprinted).

Extracts from a Letter, dated June 25, 1869, to John Holden, on Edgar Poe's "Raven."

Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge's Sale Catalogue of Autograph Letters. Lot 145. p. 22, Nov. 27, 1869.

1870.

A Mark in Time. (Sonnet).

The Fortnightly Review, April, 1870, p. 432.
(Not reprinted).

In the Woods. (Poem in nine stanzas).

The Fortnightly Review, August, 1870, pp. 179-183.

The last stanza only of this poem was reprinted in "A Reading of Earth," 1888, under the title "Dierge in Woods," p. 64.

1871.

THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY RICHMOND, By GEORGE MEREDITH. In three volumes. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 15, Waterloo Place. 1871. Crown 8vo, pp. xii. 941. In 60 chapters.

The second edition, identical with the above, was also issued in 1871.

This work originally appeared in 60 chapters, in *Cornhill*, with 15 initial and 15 full-page illustrations by Mr. George Du Maurier, from Sept., 1870 to Nov., 1871, inclusive.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1887 and 1889, pp. 544.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

A Colonial Edition, identical with the above, was printed for Messrs. G. Robertson and Co. in 1887.

REVIEWS—*Athenæum*, p. 590, Nov. 4, 1871. *Daily News*, Nov. 6, 1871. *The Echo*, Nov. 10, 1871. *The Examiner*, p. 1122, Nov. 11, 1871. *The Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 20, 1871. *The Graphic*, Nov. 25, 1871. *The Morning Post*, Dec. 2, 1871. *Westminster Review*, vol. 41, N.S., p. 274, Jan., 1872. *The Spectator*, pp. 79-80, Jan. 20, 1872. *The Australasian*, Feb. 10, 1872. *Vanity Fair*, March 16, 1872. *Blackwood's Magazine*, p. 755, June, 1872. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, June 14, 1886. *Vanity Fair*, June 20, 1886. *Time*, vol. iii., N.S., pp. 247-248 (by Arthur Symons), Feb., 1886.

1876.

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER. By GEORGE MEREDITH author of the "Shaving of Shagpat," the "Ordeal of Richard Feverel," etc., etc. In 3 vols. London: Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly. 1876. Crown 8vo, pp. xxi. 969. In 56 chapters.

This work originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, in 56 chapters, from Aug., 1874, to Dec., 1875 inclusive.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1886 and 1889, pp. vii. 506.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

This work, with an Introductory Note of three pages, signed "P.R.," is included in the "Colonial Edition" of "Petherick's Collection of Favourite and Approved Authors." 1889.

This work is also included in Baron Tauchintz's "Collection of British Authors." 2 vols., p. 672. 1876.

REVIEWS.—*Daily News*, Dec. 22, 1875. *Athenæum*, p. 19, Jan. 1, 1876. *The Standard*, Jan. 4, 1876. *The Examiner*, p. 45, by G. B. S. (*i.e.*, Geo. Barnett Smith), Jan. 8, 1876. *The Times*, p. 4, Jan. 8, 1876. *The Graphic*, Jan. 8, 1876. *The Academy*, p. 51 by Dr. R. F. Littledale, Jan. 15, 1876. *Pall Mall Gazette*, pp. 11—12, Feb. 5, 1876. *Canadian Monthly*, pp. 341—343, May, 1876. *Saturday Review*, May 13, 1876. *Cope's Tobacco Plant* (by James Thomson), June, 1876. *The Secularist* (by James Thomson), 1876. *Time*, vol. iv., new series, pp. 508-509 (by Arthur Symons), Oct., 1886.

1877.

THE HOUSE ON THE BEACH: A REALISTIC TALE. *The New Quarterly Magazine*, Jan., 1877. No. 14, pp. 329—410.

(Not reprinted in England).

An unauthorised edition of this Tale was issued by Messrs. Harper & Bros., in their "Half-Hour" Series, No. 22, 1877. 24mo, pp. 140. 20 cents.

On the Idea of Comedy, and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit.

(A Lecture delivered at the London Institution, Feb. 1st, 1877).

The New Quarterly Magazine, April, 1877. No. 15, pp. 1—40.

(Not reprinted).

The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper. *The New Quarterly Magazine*, July, 1877. No. 16, pp. 428—478.

(Not reprinted).

1879.

THE EGOIST: A COMEDY IN NARRATIVE. By GEORGE MEREDITH. In 3 vols. London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1, Paternoster Square. 1879. Crown 8vo, pp. xiii. 1010.

Second Edition, with a Frontispiece by H. M. P[aget], was issued, in 1 vol, by Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co. 1880. Crown 8vo, pp. 505.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1886 and 1889, pp. vii. 505.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and are identical with them.

UNAUTHORISED EDITION.

No. 90 in "Harper's Franklin Square Library." 15 Cents.

REVIEWS.—*Athenæum*, p. 555 (by W. E. Henley), Nov. 1, 1879. *The Examiner*, p. 1409, Nov. 1, 1879. *The Spectator*, pp. 1383—1384, Nov. 1, 1879. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 10 (by W. E. Henley), Nov. 3, 1879. *Daily News*, p. 6, Nov. 12,

1879. *Saturday Review*, p. 607, Nov. 15, 1879. *The Academy*, p. 369, by W. E. Henley, Nov. 22, 1879. *Cope's Tobacco Plant* (by James Thomson), Jan., 1880. *British Quarterly* (by Henry Allon, D.D.), p. 232, Jan., 1880. *Westminster Review*, vol. 57, new series, p. 287, Jan., 1880. *The Teacher*, p. 130, (by W. E. Henley), Feb. 14, 1880. *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. 128, pp. 401—404, Sept., 1880. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, May 7, 1887. *Time*, vol. 4, new series, p. 755 (by Arthur Symons), Dec. 1886.

The Tale of Chloe: An Episode in the History of Beau Beamish.

The New Quarterly Magazine, July, 1879, pp. 57-113. (Not reprinted).

1880.

THE TRAGIC COMEDIANS: A STUDY OF A WELL-KNOWN STORY. (Enlarged from *The Fortnightly Review*). By GEORGE MEREDITH. In two volumes. London: Chapman & Hall, Limited, 193, Piccadilly. 1880. Crown 8vo, pp. 390. In 17 chapters.

This story originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, in 15 chapters, from October, 1880 to February, 1881, inclusive.

Another Edition was issued by Messrs. Ward, Lock & Co., in the "Select Authors'" series, at 2/-. (1881). One vol., 8vo, pictorial boards, pp. 309.

This work is included in Baron Tauchnitz's "Collection of British Authors." pp. 280. 1881.

"The Tragic Comedians" tells the story of an episode in the life of Ferdinand Lassalle—the love-episode which led to his tragic death. All the characters are real people, only the names being changed. Mr. Meredith's main authority was the book written by the heroine of his narrative, Helene von Racowitza (neé Helene von Dönniges), entitled "Meine Beziehungen zu Ferdinand Lassalle." The book was published at Breslau, in 1879, by Schottlaender (pp. 188). See also for an account of the situation from a more independent standpoint, "Lassalle's Tod. Im Anschluss an die memoriess der Helene von Racowitza: Meine Beziehungen zu Ferdinand Lassalle zur Ergänzung derselben." Chemnitz: Ernest Schmeizner. 1880.

Subjoined are some of the principal characters and their English substitutes.

Real Names.	*Characters in the Novel.*
Ferdinand Lassalle	Sigismund Alvan.
Helene von Dönniges ...	Clotilde von Rüdiger.
Yanko von Racowitza ...	Marko Romaris.
Baron Korff	Count Kollin.
Countess von Hatzfeldt ...	Lucie Baroness von Crefeldt.
Rustow	Tresten.
Dr. Haenle	Dr. Störchel.

The following articles also throw considerable light on the characters in this book:—

Ferdinand Lassalle, The German Social Democrat. By J. M. Ludlow. *The Fortnightly Review*, April, 1869. pp. 419-453.

A Son of the New Time. *Temple Bar*, March, 1881. pp. 314-329.

An Episode in the Life of Ferdinand Lassalle (with a portrait). By M. Walters. *The Universal Review*, August 15, 1890. pp. 521-534.

REVIEWS—*The Athenæum*, Jan. 8, 1881. *Daily News*, p. 3, Jan. 27, 1881. *Scotsman*, p. 6, Jan, 28, 1881. *Truth*, Jan, 28, 1881. *The World*, Feb, 7, 1881. *Westminster Review*, vol. 59, N,S., p, 612, April, 1881. *Melbourne Argus*, May 14, 1881.

Letter to James Thomson ["B. V."]
See the "Life of James Thomson." By H. S. Salt. pp. 153 and 154.

1883.

Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth. By GEORGE MEREDITH. London: Macmillan & Co. 1883. Extra fcap 8vo. pp. xi. 181, and a Note on the end of fly leaf.

Inscribed to James Cotter Morrison.
Antistans mihi milibus trecentis.

CONTENTS:

The Woods of Westermain.
A Ballad of Past Meridian (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, June, 1876, p. 829.
The Day of the Daughter of Hades.
The Lark Ascending, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, May, 1881, pp. 588-591.
Phoebus with Admetus, (originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Dec. 1880, Vol 43, pp. 122-4).
Melampus.
Love in the Valley, (originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Oct. 1878, Vol 51, pp. 445-51).
The Three Singers to Young Blood.
The Orchard and the Heath, (originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Feb. 1868, pp. 362-366).
Martin's Puzzle, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, June, 1865, pp. 239-241).
Earth and Man.
A Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, Aug. 1876, pp. 232-241).

SONNETS:

Lucifer in Starlight.
The Star Sirus.
Sense and Spirit.
Earth's Secret.
The Spirit of Shakespeare, Continued. } originally appeared in *The Athenæum*, Feb. 10, 1883, p. 184.
Internal Harmony.
Grace and Love.
Appreciation.
The Discipline of Wisdom.
The State of Age.
Progress.
The World's Advance.
A Certain People.
The Garden of Epicurus.
A Later Alexandrian.
The Orson of the Muse.
The Point of Taste.
Camelus Saltat.
Continued.
To J. M. [John Morley,] originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, June, 1867, p. 696.
To a Friend Lost, T. T. [Tom Taylor], originally appeared in *The Cornhill Magazine*, Oct. 1880.
My Theme.
Continued.
Time and Sentiment.

REVIEWS—*The Times*, June 11, 1883. *St. James' Gazette*, pp. 6-7, June 25, 1883. *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 29, 1883. *The Academy*, (by Mark Pattison), pp. 37-38, July 21, 1883, [Reprinted in *The Literary News*, (U.S.A.), pp. 318-319, Oct. 1883]. *The Scotsman*, July 21, 1883. *Manchester Guardian*, July 23, 1883. *Merry England*, (by Mrs. Alice Meynell), Aug.

1883. *Literary World*, Aug. 3, 1883. *Glasgow Herald*, Aug. 7, 1883. See also letter headed "A Voyage round the World," (by Moncur D. Conway) *Glasgow Herald*, Aug. 14, 1883. *Athenæum*, pp. 103-105, (by Thedore Watts), Aug. 28, 1883. *The Contemporary, Review*, by W. P. Ker, Sept. 1883. *Melbourne Argus*, Sep. 15, 1883. *Fortnightly Review*, by W. L. Courtney, pp. 717-718, Nov. 1883. *Daily News*, Dec. 4, 1883. *Literary World*, (Boston, U.S.A.), p. 454, Dec. 15, 1883. *Critic, U.S.A.*, Dec. 29, 1883. *Annual Register*, 1883.

1885.

DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS: A NOVEL. By GEORGE MEREDITH. Considerably enlarged from *The Fortnightly Review*. In Three Volumes. London: Chapman & Hall, Limited. 1885. Crown 8vo, pp. xx. 1009, In 43 chapters.

Inscribed to Frederick Pollock.

Three editions in this form were exhausted in 1885.

Twenty-six chapters of this work (down to chap. 8, vol. III.) originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, from June to December, 1884, inclusive.

Reprinted by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, in the Collected Editions of 1885 and 1889, pp. vi. 348.

The Author's American Copyright Editions of this work were issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, simultaneously with the first and second English Collected Editions, and they are identical with them.

A Colonial Edition, identical with the above was printed for Messrs. E. A. Petherick & Co., in 1887.

UNAUTHORISED EDITIONS.

No. 468 in "Harper's Franklin Square Library." Price 20 cents.

No. 350 in George Munro's (N. Y.) "Seaside Library," p. 106, 12mo. 10 cents.

This Edition was obviously reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review*, it is consequently only a fragment (down to chapter xxi.), although no intimation to the effect appears. The Author's concluding words of reference to an "extended chronicle" being studiously omitted.

A Burlesque (by Rudolph Lehmann) of this work, under the title of "Joanna of the Crossways" (by George Verimith, author of *Richard's Several Editions, The Aphorist, Shampoo's Shaving-Pot,)* appeared as No. iii. of "Mr. Punch's Prize Novels," with an illustration by E. T. R. *Punch*, Oct. 18, 1890, pp. 191-2.

REVIEWS—*The Guardian*, Feb. 25, 1885. *The Academy*, p. 147, by James Ashcroft Noble, Feb. 28, 1885. *Court Circular*, Mar. 2, 1885. *Vanity Fair*, Mar. 2, 1885. *Daily News*, (Leader), Mar. 10, 1885. *Whitehall Review*, Mar. 12, 1885. *Athenæum*, pp. 339-340, (by W. E. Henley), Mar. 14, 1885. *The Graphic*, Mar. 14, 1885. *St. James' Gazette*, Mar. 16, 1885. *Saturday Review*, pp. 389-390, (by Cosmo Monkhouse), Mar. 21, 1885. *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 4, Mar. 28, 1885. *Illustrated London News*, Mar. 28, 1885. *Scotsman*, p. 5, Mar. 30, 1885. *Glasgow Herald*, p. 6, April 9, 1885. *The Spectator*, pp. 517-518, April 18, 1885. *Truth*, April 23, 1885. *The Times*, June 1, 1885. *Standard*, June 2, 1885. *Literary World*, (Boston, U.S.A.), July 25, 1885.

[A Letter to the Queen on Lord Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill. By the Hon. Mrs. Norton.

"Only a woman's hair."

London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans. 1855. Demy 8vo, pp. 155.

Mr. Le Gallienne writes me—

"I don't know that there is any authoritative warrant for the inclusion of Mrs. Norton's 'Letter' among Meredithiana, but the gossip which identifies her with Diana is, of course, sufficiently general to make a tenative inclusion imperative.

That the gossip is well-founded a very cursory perusal of the letter puts quite beyond doubt, the circumstances are too nearly parallel to admit of hesitation.

If it really be so, a very interesting artistic comparison might be made between this original Diana and her of the Crossways. Brilliant as the letter is, it suffers from a hysterical rhetoric that differentiates them to a degree which bears triumphant witness to Meredith's creative power."]

On the Danger of War. [Sonnet.] *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 1st, 1885, p. 3.

(Not reprinted).

1886.

A Pause in the Strife. [Political Article.] *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 9th, 1886.
(Not reprinted).

Concession to the Celt. [Essay.] *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1886, pp. 448—451.
(Not reprinted).

To Cardinal Manning. [Sonnet.] *Pall Mall Gazette*, Nov. 5th, 1886.
(Not reprinted).

1887.

BALLADS AND POEMS OF TRAGIC LIFE. By GEORGE MEREDITH. London: Macmillan and Co.; and New York. 1887. Extra fcap. 8vo, p. 160.

This work was also issued by Messrs. Roberts Brothers, Boston, in 1887.

CONTENTS:

The Two Masks.
Archduchess Anne.
The Song of Theodolinda, (originally appeared in *The Cornhill Magazine*, Sept. 1872. p.p. 308-12).
A Preaching from a Spanish Ballad, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, Aug. 1886).
The Young Princess, (originally appeared in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, Dec. 1886, p.p. 184-90).
King Harald's Trance.
Whimper of Sympathy.
Young Reynard.
Manfred.
Hernani.
The Nuptials of Attila, (originally appeared in *The New Quarterly Magazine*, Jan. 1879, p.p. 47-62).
Aneurin's Harp, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, Sep. 1871, p.p. 255-259).

France, December, 1870, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, Jan. 1871, p.p. 86-94).
Men and Man.
The Last Contention.
Periander.
Solon.
Bellerophon.
Phaéthôn, (originally appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, Sep. 1867, p.p. 293-295).
Notes.

REVIEWS—*Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 5, May 26, 1887. *The Athenæum*, p. 759, (by W. E. Henley), June 11, 1887. *The Academy*, p. 406, by J. M. Gray, June 11, 1887. *The Saturday Review*, p. 851, (by W. E. Henley), June 11, 1887. *The Curio*, (U.S.A,). (by Stuart Merrill), p. 267, Jan. and Feb. 1888. *The Critic*, (U.S.A.), p. 242, Nov. 17, 1888. *Progress*, (by G. W. Foote), pp. 218-221, July, 1887.

To Colonel Charles. [Poem.] *Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 16, 1887, p. 16.

(Not reprinted).

Letter on the Ambleside Railway. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 25, 1887, p. 4.

(Not reprinted).

Mr. George Meredith's Contribution under the head of "Fine passages in Prose and Verse Selected by Living Men of Letters." *The Fortnightly Review*, August, 1887. pp. 310—313.

"The 24th *Iliad* contains the highest reaches in poetry."

"In Modern English Verse I would cite for excellence Keat's *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, and *Ode to Autumn*; Tennyson's *Œnone;* the *Kubla Khan of Coleridge.*"

"In Modern Prose the description of Rachel, under title of 'Vashti,' in *Villette*, by Charlotte Brontë, chapter 23rd."

"In Poetry Mr. Meredith gives the whole of the second scene in the fourth act of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII.*"

"Further, Mr. Meredith gives the passage from Virgil's Æneid, Book 4, known as Dido's Lament."

"In Prose, Mr. Meredith gives Hamlet's Speech to the Players, and also the passage from *Villette*, in which Charlotte Brontë describes the great French Actress, Rachel."

"Further, Mr. George Meredith gives the passage in the *Memoires* of Saint Simon, which describes the character of the Regent Orleans."

To Children. For Tyrants. [Poem.] *The English Illustrated Magazine*, Dec., 1887, pp. 184—186.

(Not reprinted).

1888.

A READING OF EARTH. By GEORGE MEREDITH. London: Macmillan & Co.; and New York. 1888. Extra fcap. 8vo, pp. vi. 136.

CONTENTS:

Seed-Time.
Hard Winter.
The South-Western.
The Thrush in February, (originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Aug. 1885, pp. 265-71).
The Appeasement of Demeter, (originally appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Sep. 1887, vol. 56, pp. 374-7).
Earth and a Wedded Woman.
Mother to Babe, (originally appeared in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, Oct. 1886, p. 26, with an illustration by the Poet's son, Mr. W. Maxse Meredith).
Woodland Peace.
The Question Whither.
Outer and Inner.
Nature and Life.
Dirge in Woods, (This poem formed one stanza, the last, of a poem in nine stanzas, entitled "In the Woods" which Mr. Meredith, contributed to *The Fortnightly Review*, of Aug. 1870).

A Faith on Trial.
Change in Recurrence.
Hymn to Colour.
Meditation under Stars.
Woodman and Echo.
The Wisdom of Eld.
Earth's Preference.
Society.
Winter Heavens.

EPITAPHS:

M. M. (Mrs. Meredith).
The Lady C. M. (Lady Caroline Maxwell?)
J. C. M. (James Cotter Morrison).
Islet the Dachs.
Gordon of Khartoum.
The Emperor Frederick of our Time.
The Years Sheddings.

REVIEWS.

By Mr. Meredith's special request no copies of this work were sent out for review, I have however met with the four following notices:—

The Scots Observer, pp. 274-5, Jan. 26, 1889. *Manchester Guardian*, Feb. 4, 1889. *The Scottish Art Review*, pp. 263-5, by William Sharp, Feb. 4, 1889. *National Reformer*, (by G. W. Foote), Feb. 24, 1889.

The Pilgrim's Scrip: or, Wit and Wisdom of George Meredith. With Selections from his Poetry, and an Introduction. Boston (U.S.A.): Roberts Bros., 1888.

This volume has a portrait and an introduction, more or less personal, of 50 pages by Mrs. Gilman.

REVIEW—*Scots Observer* p. 245, July 20, 1889.

1889.

Jump to Glory Jane. [Poem.] *The Universal Review*, Oct., 1889, pp. 240—252.
(Not reprinted).

Mr. Meredith's Opinion of Jas. Thomson. ["B. V."] See "The Life of James Thomson." By H. S. Salt. pp. 179—180.

"The News from Venice." [Sonnet on the Death of Robert Browning.] *Pall Mall Gazette*, Dec. 14, 1889, p. 1. See also Mr. W. Sharp's "Life of Browning," pp. 197-8.
A *fac simile* of this Sonnet was given in the *Pall Mall Budget*, December 19, 1889, p. 1623.
(Not reprinted).

1890.

The Art of Authorship: Methods of Work, and advice to Young Beginners. Personally Contributed by leading Authors of the Day. Compiled and Edited by George Bainton.
Contribution by Mr. Meredith, pp. 129-132.

Letter on above Subject, *The Author*, June 16, 1890, vol I., No. 2, p. 45.

ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS. Mr. MEREDITH'S New Story, which will run through *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Australasian*, and the Sunday Edition of *The Sun* [New York], simultaneously, from October, 1890.

PERSONALIA.

Mr. MEREDITH was Born in Hampshire, on February 12th, 1828,

"Many Happy Returns of the Day."

The World, February 12th, 1890, p. 16.

Mr. Meredith's birthday is not given in any of the books of reference, such as "Men of the Time."

George Meredith. By Flora L. Shaw. *The New Princeton Review*, March and April, 1887, vol. III., new series, pp. 220—229.

An Interview with George Meredith. By W. M. F. (*i.e.*, Wm. Morton Fullerton). *Boston Advertiser* (U.S.A.), Dec. 17, 1888.

The Pilgrim's Scrip. Introduction by Mrs. Gilmore. 50 pp. Roberts Brothers, Boston, 1888.

Reprinted in the Supplement of the *British Weekly*, Jan. 4, 1889, p. 164.

Old Neuwieders (Mr. Meredith's School and Schoolfellows). *Daily News*, January 18, 1889.

PORTRAITS OF MR. MEREDITH.

Pen Drawing by D. G. Rossetti. 1858.

Mr. J. T. Nettleship writes to me on this subject, as follows :—

"In 1858 Rossetti completed the pen drawing of which the title was "Mary Magdalene at the door of Simon the Pharisee." I have often seen it at Rossetti's house in Cheyne Walk. It was upright; the central group was ormed by the Magdalene, her lover, and a white dove or fawn with roses hung round its neck. The Magdalene's head is turned in profile from left to right, looking in at the housedoor, in the upper part, and to the left of the composition, the head of Christ is seen through a window of the porch; the head is in profile, looking at the Magdalene, *i.e.*, from right to left, and is silhouetted darkly against a light behind it. I have always understood that this head was originally drawn from George Meredith; certainly his photograph which you shewed me sometime since, vividly recalls the character of this head of Christ."

* 1888.—*Harper's Monthly Magazine*, June 1888, p. 15.

* ,, "The Pilgrim's Scrip," Boston.

,, Some Sketches at the Parnell Dinner, (George Meredith, John Morley, Edwin Arnold, and others), *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 10, 1888.

* 1889.—*The Book Buyer*, Jan. 1889, p. 581.
* ,, *The Star*, Feb. 19, 1889.
* ,, *The Magazine of Poetry*, July, 1889, p. 347.
,, *The Graphic*, May 18, 1889, "Mr. Meredith Studies Character," at the Parnell Commission, by S. P. Hall.
* 1890.—*The Pall Mall Gazette*, Jan. 25, 1890,
* ,, *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, Feb. 1, 1890.
* ,, *Great Thoughts*, Oct. 4, 1890.

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* All these portraits seem to be engraved from Mr. Hillyer's photograph.

ARTICLES ON MR. MEREDITH'S NOVELS, OR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEM.

1864.

Novels with a purpose. ("Richard Feverel" and "Emilia in England.") *Westminster Review*, July, 1864. pp. 25-49. [By Justin McCarthy, M.P. Reprinted in his volume of Essays—"Con Amore," p. 316-360. Tinsley Brothers. 1868].

1867.

Le Roman Anglais Contemporain. Par E. D. Forgues. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1867.

1877.

Living Novelists, No. 5.—George Meredith. (By W. E. Henley). *London: The Conservative Weekly Journal*, August 25, 1877.

1879.

The Novels of George Meredith. (By Arabella Shore). *The British Quarterly*, April, 1879. Vol. 69, pp. 411-425.

1881.

A Note to Mr. George Meredith *(on the occasion of "Beauchamp's Career")*, May, 1876.

Essays and Phantasies. By Jas. Thomson. London: Reeves & Turner, 196, Strand. 1881. pp. 289-295.

1885.

Mr. George Meredith and the Modern Novel. *Daily News*, October 19th, 1885.

George Meredith's Novels. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Dec. 12, 1885.

Robert Browning and George Meredith. A Note (No. 80) on their similarity. By Arthur Symons. *Browning Society's Papers*. Part I., vol. ii. 1885-6. pp. 80-82.

1886.

George Meredith's Works. (By W. E. Henley). *The State*, April 17, 1886.

George Meredith's Novels. By W. L. Courtney, M.A. *The Fortnightly Review*, June, 1886. pp. 771-779. Reprinted in *The Book Mart* (U.S.A.), Oct., 1886.

Mr. George Meredith's Novels. *Saturday Review*, July 24, 1886. pp. 116-117.

George Meredith's Novels. The subject of "The London Letter," signed H.B. *The Critic* (U.S.A.), August 14, 1886. pp. 77-78.

George Meredith's Novels. *The Spectator*, Oct. 16, 1886. pp. 1381-1382. [Reprinted in *The Critic* (U.S.A.), vol. xi., pp. 205-206, Oct. 22, 1887.]

1887.

The Novels of George Meredith. *Literary World* (U.S.A.), April 30, 1887, vol. xviii., pp. 137-138.

Mr. George Meredith's Works. *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 7, 1887. [Reprinted in *Pall Mall Budget*. May 12, 1887. pp. 29-30.

A Word with George Meredith. *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1887, vol. lix., pp. 854-855.

1888.

George Meredith. By George Parsons Lathrop. *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb., 1888, No. 364, vol. lxi., pp. 178-193.

The Functions of the Novelist, and the way George Meredith fulfils them. A paper read at the University College Literary Society. By Miss Adeline Sergeant. *Academy*, March 10, 1888. p. 175.

The Gospel according to George Meredith. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1888. Part I. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Oct. 15th 1888. Part II.

The Lost Works of George Meredith. By J. M. Barrie. [The Lecture on Comedy and the Three Stories, contributed by Mr. Meredith to *The New Quarterly Magazine*]. *The Scots Observer*, Nov. 24, 1888.

1889.

The Novels of George Meredith. By J. M. Barrie. *The Contemporary Review*, Oct., 1888. pp. 575-586. [Reprinted in *Eclectic Magazine* (U.S.A.), vol. 112, pp. 118-126, Jan., 1889.

Thackeray's Characters in Real Life (with reference to Mr. Meredith's characters in "The Egoist"). *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 30, 1889. p. 3.

Letters to Living Authors: To Mr. George Meredith, signed "Roderick Random" (*i.e.* J. A. Steuart). *Wit and Wisdom*, May 11, 1889, pp. 9-10.

George Meredith's Views of Women. By a Woman (*i.e.* Miss Adeline Sergeant). *Temple Bar*, June, 1889. No. 343, vol. 86, pp. 207-213. [Reprinted in *Book Mart* (U.S.A.), August, 1890].

George Meredith. *The Echo*, June 28, 1889, p. 1.

George Meiedith. Selections from Original Contributions by James Thomson to *Cope's Tobacco Plant.* Liverpool: At the Office of *Cope's Tobacco Plant.* 1889. pp. 46-48.

George Meredith as a Theorist—By T. Mc.Laughlin. *New Englander,* August, 1889, vol. 51, pp. 81—95.

Modern Men—George Meredith. [By Jas. McLaren Cobban]. *The Scots Observer,* Sept. 28, 1889, pp. 515—516.

Modern Men.—George Meredith. Reprinted from *The Scots Observer.* London: Edward Arnold, 18, Warwick Square, E.C.

Fiction—Plethoric and Anæmic. By Wm. Watson. *The National Review,* October, 1889, pp. 167—183.

The Daughter of Dreams. *Family Herald,* Oct. 26, 1889, pp. 413—414.

1890.

The Meredithyramb and its Critics. By Richard Le Gallienne. *Time,* March, 1890, pp. 307—319.

George Meredith. Views and Reviews. By W. E. Henley. pp. 43-55. London: David Nutt. 1890.

George Meredith. *Harvard Monthly,* vol. iv., p. 138. By G. P. Baker, Jun.

George Meredith. *Great Thoughts,* Oct. 4, 1890, pp. 216—220,

MR. GEORGE MEREDITH'S POETRY.

Poets of To-day. By W. L. Courtney. *The Fortnightly Review*, pp. 717—718, November, 1883.

George Meredith's Poetry. By [Arthur Symons.] *Westminster Review*, Sept., 1887, vol. 128, pp. 693—697.

An Inarticulate Poet. *The Spectator*, Oct. 15, 1887.

George Meredith's Nature Poems. By Richard Le Gallienne. *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, September, 1890, pp. 418—424.

APPRECIATIONS.

New Poets. *Edinburgh Review*, Oct., 1856, pp. 355—356.

Mr. Pater's Essays. By John Morley. *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1873, p. 473.

The Confessions of a Young Man. pp. 269—270. [As Poet.] By George Moore.

The Novel of Manners. By H. D. Traill. *Nineteenth Century*, October, 1875, p. 576.

The Dedication of the "Introduction to the Study of Browning" *(Cassell & Co., 1886)*, by Arthur Symons, runs thus: "To George Meredith, Novelist and Poet, this book on an illustrious contemporary is with deep respect and admiration inscribed."

Essays and Studies. 1875. [As Poet.] By A. C. Swinburne. p. 87.

The New Fiction. By Henry Holbeach, *i.e.* William Brighty Rands. *The Contemporary Review*, February, 1880, pp. 250—251. Reprinted in *Appleton's Journal*, vol. 23, p. 345.

A Gossip on Romance. By R. L. Stevenson. *Longman's Magazine*, No. 1., Nov., 1882, p. 75.

D. G. Rossetti: A Record and a Study. By William Sharp. 1882. pp. 25 and 352.

The Works of Fielding. *The Athenæum*, Nov. 4, 1882, p. 593.

George Eliot's Life. Vol I., pp. 389—390. 1885.

Our Noble Selves. [By Grant Allen]. *The Fortnightly Review*, February, 1887, pp. 214 and 217.

The present State of the Novel. By Geo. Sanitsbury. *Fortnightly Review*, Sept., 1887, p. 411.

Aphorisms, An Address. By John Morley. Macmillan & Co., 1887, p. 20.

Books that have influenced me [Egoist.] By R. L. Stevenson. No. 1, *The British Weekly Extras*, 1887, pp. 12 and 13.

The Reign of Queen Victoria. Edited by T. Humphry Ward. 2 vols. 1887. Vol. II., p. 491. By Richard Garnett.

Life and Literature: An Evening with Mr. R. L. Stevenson. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Aug. 8, 1888, p. 11.

Review of F. W. Robinson's "The Youngest Miss Green." *The Athenæum*, Sept. 15, 1888, p. 350.

Life of James Thomson ("B. V.") By H. S. Salt. pp. 22, 136, 138, 140, 141, 152, 154, 156, 165, 167, 179, 180, 292, 293. Bertram Dobell. London: 1889.

This volume is indispensable to Meredith Students; it throws a strong side light on Mr. Meredith's Character.

The Decay of Lying: A Dialogue. By Oscar Wilde. *The Nineteenth Century*, January, 1889, p. 40.

At Our Booking Office. By Baron de Book Worms. *Punch*, Jan. 12, 1889, p. 22.

Books and Bookmen. By "Tatler" [*i.e.*, Clement K. Shorter.]

There are many "appreciatons" in this interesting weekly column (on Thursdays) of Mr. Shorter's. *The Star*, May 9, 1889.

A Dead Man's Diary. 1890. Edited by G. T. Bettamy, M.A. pp. 47—49.

Romance and Youth. *St. James' Gazette*, February 18, 1890.

Tennyson and after? *The Fortnightly Review*, May, 1890, pp. 629 and 635.

Distinction. By Coventry Patmore. *The Fortnightly Review*, June, 1890, p. 827.

Ferdinand Lassalle. By M. Walters. *The Universal Review*, August 15, 1890, p. 521.

Note on Charlotte Brontë. By A. C. Swinburne, p. 10

A Voice from the Nile. By Jas. Thomson. Bertram Dobell's Introduction. pp. 40 and 49.

A History of Our Own Times. By Justin McCarthy, M.P. Vol. IV., pp. 550—551.

Life of Robert Browning. (Great Writer Series). By William Sharp. 1890. pp. 123, 124, 186, 197, 198.

DEPRECIATIONS.

As Novelist. "The Confessions of a Young Man." By George Moore. pp. 269—277.

Fiction—Plethoric and Anæmic. By William Watson. pp. 167—183.

POSTCRIPT.—[*The following details have come to hand too late for insertion under their respective headings in the foregoing pages. J. L.*]

ARTICLES ON Mr. MEREDITH'S NOVELS.

Mr. Meredith's Novels. By A. N. Monkhouse. *The Manchester Quarterly*, Oct., 1890, pp. 293-322.

DEPRECIATIONS.

How One Wrestled with George Meredith, Esq., Novelist, and was Thrown.

Full-page illustration by J. Bernard Partridge. *Hood's Comic Annual*, 1891, p. 63.

REVIEW.

The Egoist. *New Quarterly Magazine*, pp. 228-232, Jan., 1880.

AMERICAN EDITIONS.

1877.

The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper.

This story ran through *The Sun* [New York], in 1890.

Reprinted in "Lovell's Westminster Series." New York: John W. Lovell Company, 1890. Price 25 cents.

1879.

The Tale of Chloe: An Episode in the History of Beau Beamish.

This story ran through *The Sun* [New York], in 1890.

Reprinted in "Lovell's Westminster Series." New York: John W. Lovell Company, 1890. Price 25 cents.

ERRATA. The critical note on *Saint Paul*, (p. xxxii.) should appear under year 1868, p. xxxiii. For *Mrs. Gilmore*, p. lv., read *Mrs. Gilman*; and for *Mr. Hillyer's* p. lvii., read *Mr. Hollyer's*.

SOME NOTES IN REGARD TO GEORGE MEREDITH IN AMERICA.

BY

W. MORTON FULLERTON.

SOME NOTES IN REGARD TO GEORGE MEREDITH IN AMERICA.

SOME one said once of Matthew Arnold, in reference to a well-known impression left by his original style, that he attained clearness by defect of vision. It is a saying not wholly to my mind. But there is much truth in it; and the fact of this truth is largely accountable for his vogue, and his distinction as a writer of limpid and unequivocal prose. He was always intelligible, and more than that he was always charming; and this is a great thing.

These were qualities that gave Arnold a strong power of attraction in America; and for many men, at colleges and the universities, men given at the time when they first made his acquaintance to Schopenhauer and Omar Khayyam he was the chief voice out of England across the sea; and another writer, who, owing to his Aristophanic temper, never could have worn the academic robe of Arnold, a writer far greater in spirit and in achievement than Arnold, was never heard of among us.

I remember so well when the name of Meredith first became in America a name to conjure with; and most clearly of all I remember the surprised awakening for some of us when we realized how long this man had been writing, and that we had known nothing of him.

There seemed no excuse that a people who were the first to detect the greatness of Carlyle had failed to acquaint themselves with the kindred genius of George Meredith—kindred at least in many respects. The oversight was not easy to explain. But the American audience of to-day and of this recent period of which I am speaking was, it was evident when one stopped to think, a very different audience from that of the early New England and the early Boston; for subtlety, and graces, and tricks of style were not then thought so desirable characteristics as spontaneity of sincere expression from the virile heart of a man. So, without my analysing too curiously, it will be plain by these few suggestions in what direction the explanation of the fact would lead me had I room here to consider it. I hasten to state with brevity one or two unobtrusive facts in regard to Meredith in America; facts which, in a book of this sort, will not be out of place.

Before the appearance of the first uniform American edition, as to the exact date of which I am from this point of time uncertain, George Meredith was scarcely known at all in America. I recall Professor Croswell, of Harvard, once saying to me that he had just been reading a very remarkable book, the work of a great mind, naming one of the novels of Meredith, and his asking me if I knew anything about the book; but either from preoccupation in my Theocritus at the time, or

more likely from the indifference of an undergraduate already sated with books to be read in anticipation of examinations, I failed to follow my friend's suggestion. He had used the English edition, and except from him I doubt if in all Cambridge I should have been able to get a copy of Meredith. For a long time even the great libraries were without a volume by Meredith, except perhaps a small poorly-printed Bowdlerized edition of *Diana* which did scarcely any service whatever in making him known in America. And then the first uniform one volume edition appeared from Roberts Brothers in Boston, and the triumphal progress began.

Even then, it was a long time, however, before George Meredith and "Owen Meredith" were quite differentiated in the popular mind. Yet many readers were deacons and deaconesses in the cult of Browning, or rabbis in his and in Emerson's school; people do such queer things in great towns, and particularly in that one which Mr. Henry James has called the "remarkable city of Boston." At the time when this edition appeared I happened to be literary editor of the *Boston Advertiser*. The first volume of the series was *Richard Feverel;* and it was upon this book that I chanced after a weary passage over a truly barren unharvested sea of modern fiction. It came as a revelation and I turned to biographical dictionaries and indexes—all I could lay my hands on—to find out

something about the author of a book which seemed to me to contain passages of supremely excellent writing, and which as a whole, notwithstanding that it was so full of crudities and exasperating defects, was, to my mind, at the least the peer of any novel of the century. There was not much to learn about Meredith in this fugitive fashion; there were a few attempts at criticism in English reviews, but these were rarely read; and then another novel in the new edition was at hand awaiting perusal. I felt that I detected almost rare qualities of insight and a great and distinguished power of original expression. But the thing was, at that time, to say so.

Once, at a dinner party, I found within me the temporary courage of my opinions. There were at the table several people of recognized authority as critics who held the ears of many men. But venturing to say a little of what I thought about Meredith, I met with only an incredulous look, born of an utter ignorance of his work. One man, however, came round with a smile and grasped my hand. The incident was typical of the attitude of the public towards Meredith. Either there was utter ignorance, or an enthusiasm equally dense and unworthy.

So that when it came to me to notice these books in the *Advertiser*, in somewhat too eulogistic phrase, and I trespassed upon the editorial page instead of disporting myself within the parallel bars of my own

more accustomed columns, a mild but waiting scepticism as to my sanity was the least offensive form of a feeling natural enough indeed, but which in its intensity took the shape of absolutely damning belief in my immature and untrained judgment. But the martyrdom was not painfully protracted. With chagrin I soon noted that I was not to be allowed the selfish pleasure of clinging to an unpopular cause. I had kept the columns as full of allusions to Mr. Meredith, and of editorials upon him, as my editor-in-chief would endure; and as a result had called out a number of responses that kept, as the expression is, the ball rolling. In less than a year in Boston we all read Meredith, and Mr. Niles up there in the bay-window on Beacon Hill would have told you that he was contemplating a new and cheaper edition. Philadelphia, meanwhile, and New York, had done themselves the honour of Mr. Meredith's company; and I hope with all my heart that Mr. Meredith had honest practical proof of it. Nothing ever written in America upon Mr. Meredith was so opportune or effective, I may say, as Miss Flora Shaw's article in the *Princeton Review*. We all quoted from it. But this awakening was more than thirty years late; and thirty years is so long a time to wait in the life of a man!

W. M. F.

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Never a head is dimmed with gray, but another is sunned with curls;
She was a girl and he was a boy, but yet there are boys and girls.

Ah, but alas for the smile of smiles that never but one face wore,
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